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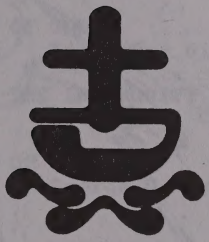
CREATION

AND THE

KINGDOM OF GOD

Consultation with Faith and Order

CREATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD



WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Programme Unit on Faith and Witness
Sub-units on Church and Society and Faith and Order

The Trinity *William Blake*

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P R E F A C E

At the request of the first meeting of the Church and Society Working Committee, Faith and Order at its Stavanger meeting in August 1985 prepared a statement "The Integrity of Creation in the Light of the Apostolic Faith". The document made some useful suggestions concerning biblical paradigms such as creation/new creation, shalom, convenant, etc., and concluded by recommending that Faith & Order and Church & Society organise a joint consultation on Creation and Kingdom. This consultation took place at Tabor House (Jesuit retreat centre), Milltown Park, Dublin, Ireland, from 6-10 May 1988.

More than 25 participants from all over the world and from different confessional backgrounds met in Dublin. The participants also celebrated daily worship services and had the opportunity of visiting different congregations as well as the ancient and historical city of Dublin. The consultation was jointly moderated by Church & Society and Faith & Order participants and staff responsibility was carried out by Dr. David Gosling (Church and Society) and Prof. Dr. Gennadios Limouris (Faith and Order).

Prior to this consultation, the full title of which was "Creation and the Kingdom of God", the two sub-units held a small preparatory meeting in York, England in May 1986, the recommendations of which have been published in Church and Society's report from its Potsdam Working Committee and in the Minutes of the Faith and Order Standing Commission meeting at Potsdam, GDR (13-20 July 1986). However, in the intervening period, Church and Society did further work on what was eventually described as theocentric ethics (which tried to bring together what had hitherto been described separately as social and environmental ethics) at its Glion Working Committee in September 1987. Faith and Order held a consultation on "The Doctrine of Creation and its Integrity - A Challenge to the Responsibility of Christianity Today" (13-20 November 1987) in Porto Alegre, Brazil (into which Church and Society made an input), and the two sub-units both contributed to the international consultation on the Integrity of Creation, held under the auspices of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) in Oslo, Norway (24 February - 5 March 1988). Thus the two sub-units and the JPIC conciliar process were extensively enriched between the York and Dublin meetings.

The format of the Dublin Meeting was essentially very straightforward. Two groups, each containing a mixture of representatives of each of the two sub-units, listened to carefully prepared presentations on the theme "Creation and the Kingdom of God" from different perspectives: "**Plant Breeders' Rights and the Integrity of Creation**" (Richard G. Chambers, Church and Society); "**Creation and the Kingdom of God**" (V. Rev. Prof. Dr. George Dragas, Faith and Order); "**Creation - Kingdom of God - Eschatology**" (V.Rev. Prof. Dr. Gennadios Limouris, Faith and Order); "**Creation and the Kingdom of God**" (Rev. Dr. Kjell Ove Nilsson, Faith and Order); "**Does the World Have a Future?**" (Rev. Dr. Patricia Wilson-Kastner, Church and Society).

Participants worked in plenary and group sessions. The first group (Group I) then undertook a critique of the sections of **Confessing One Faith** (Faith and Order Paper No. 140, WCC, Geneva 1987) dealing with the Creation (essentially pp. 28-36 from the perspective of Creation and Kingdom) to assist Faith and Order in its ongoing work. The second group (Group II) made a critique of Church and Society's work on theocentric ethics as summarised in the Glion Working Committee Report (pp. 37-44) from the same perspective. A third group (Group III) later drew up a summary of fundamental issues for cooperation between the two sub-units; the recommendations of all three groups were subsequently discussed and refined in plenary.

It is to be hoped that what follows will assist both Faith & Order and Church & Society in their ongoing individual and shared work, and that it will also facilitate the Council-wide conciliar process on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

We wish to express our gratitude to all participants and to those who helped in drafting the group reports, Rev. Alan D. Falconer and V.Rev. Canon Prof. D.W. Hardy, and to our Irish hosts, especially the staff of the Irish School of Ecumenics and Tabor House. Our gratitude also goes to the administrative staff, especially Ms. Barbara Loheyde, Ms. Christine Haselback, Mrs. Gudrun Smith, Mrs. Renate Sbeghen and Mrs. Eileen Chapman (who corrected and assembled the whole text for printing).

Dr. David Gosling
Dr. Freda Rajotte
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Geneva, August 1988

FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES FOR CO-OPERATION BETWEEN FAITH & ORDER AND CHURCH & SOCIETY

At this meeting in Dublin, Faith and Order and Church and Society worked together in plenary session and small groups to explore the inter-connections of their own specific concerns with the theme of "Creation and the Kingdom of God". Faith and Order has been struggling particularly with a theology of creation in the context of its work on the Apostolic Faith; Church and Society has explored questions of the integrity of creation in light of challenging global issues. Each group has felt the need of the others' insights in considering "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" from its own perspective.

As our discussions proceeded, we shared with each other a variety of problems and responses. We examined our different perspectives on creation and kingdom, we identified some questions which we believe to be fundamental to our discussions within the World Council, as well as essential to continuing interfaith dialogue. We acknowledge that we experience creation and kingdom, with the problems and challenges of our human interconnections with the cosmos in varied and complex social, political and religious/ecclesiastical contexts. We respond with many differing theological perspectives and vocabularies, and sometimes find our discussions ending in clashes in which our responses to each other and to the issues become superficial and non-responsive to the rest of the world's needs. How can we move forward?

First. Let us take time to explore our different perspectives, particularly the understandings and feelings about the inter-relationship of spirituality, theology, and ethics. We have many rich resources in our traditions to help us as we face ethical questions and challenges. Various traditions have differently connected theology and ethics in relating God's kindgom to creation. Although our traditions are not always of a common mind about relationships and procedures, they all have varied resources to complement each other. As we come to understand each other's assumptions more clearly, we find common ground and shared ways of proclaiming God's reign active in the world, as well as respectful appreciation of differences. We need to set aside a time and place to explore some of these fundamental issues. We believe we have reached a stage of maturity in our discussion in which a conference of this sort could be helpful not only to the whole WCC, but especially to the work of Faith and Order and Church and Society.

Second. Most of us can find significant common ground in a spirituality which nurtures and promotes love of and care for all God's creation. In the WCC we understand the theocentric ethics which emerge from such a perspective as Trinitarian-Incarnational ethics.

We regard this perspective as our contribution to the interfaith dialogue about the integrity of creation. We believe that such an ethic offers us a basis from which both to learn from various nations and peoples, and also to give a positive critique of values and processes of decision making in different societies.

The good news of God's activity in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit can illuminate our awareness of the ways in which social structures and behaviours disrupt and damage, as well as encourage God's intentions for justice and peace in creation. What might such a Trinitarian ethic look like? How is it a response to our experience of the whole world? What might this Trinitarian ethic contribute to our faithful following of our call to promote justice, peace and the integrity of creation?

Third. Although global and local issues are always to some extent related, it would be helpful for Church and Society to explore and identify global issues which, as such, directly affect all of us and questions which are more local in their shape. For instance, disarmament is a global issue, but many aspects are of local importance in direct and clear ways. National and international policies are set in ways that directly affect the globe and must be addressed globally. But in specific countries, like Ireland, issues of economic justice, nationalism, religious differences, longstanding tensions and histories of violent conflict give specific shape to concerns about the ways arms are obtained and used by various groups in the country, and ways in which living an active life of peace-making may overcome violent conflict. Through such concepts in the ecumenical movement as the churches in solidarity and local groups such as the proposed Council of Peace (in Ireland), the churches show how we can consult together to support and strengthen each other in bringing the reality of God's reign into a broken creation. How can we help local communities struggle with their specific problems? How can we constructively explore the inter-relationship of local and global issues?

Fourth. We Christians are part of a varied human community within the created world. Not only do we receive helpful insights from other religious traditions, but many sciences and disciplines increase our awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the cosmos. Many persons of great ethical concern with no particular religious connection are active in caring for the world and expanding the borders of our efforts to nurture all creation and also love in freedom. We need to explore more ways to dialogue with, learn from, and labour with those who in other ways are instruments of God's reign to all creation. We can affirm and act on the basis of what we share in common, as well as explore and testify to our particular Christian witness.

Dr. David Gosling
Dr. Freda Rajotte
(Church and Society)

Dr. Gennadios Limouris
(Faith and Order)

Dublin, 10 May 1988

CREATION - KINGDOM OF GOD - ESCHATOLOGY

Gennadios Limouris

The purpose of this brief introductory paper is neither to give a complete summary of the doctrine of creation in relation to the kingdom of God in the light of eschatology nor to analyse the inter-relatedness of the three, but rather to attempt to emphasize these concerns which theologies are dealing with today. It is also an attempt to show how deeply and closely all three - creation, kingdom of God, eschatology - are related to the core of the Christian message and faith, to the redemption-salvation of humankind through the Incarnate and Risen Logos. Only in this wider perspective, in the total context of Christian doctrine, viewed with an Orthodox eye, can one fully and faithfully understand even the variations of the different thoughts. Eschatological hope is rooted in the faith and cannot be understood except in this context - that belief in Christ the Redeemer is the only hope for the ages to come: the end of the world, the final consummation, the resurrection of the dead, the accomplishment of the kingdom of God, and life everlasting.

Christianity is essentially eschatological (1), and the Church is an "eschatological community", since it is the New Testament, the ultimate and the final, and consequently "the last" (2). Christ Himself is the Last Adam because He is "the New Man" (O néos anthropos) (3). The Christian perspective is intrinsically eschatological. "The Old has passed away. Behold, the New has come." It was precisely "in these last days" that God ultimately acted, once and for all, once and forever. The "end" (têlos) has come, God's design of human salvation has been consummated (John 19:28-30: tetêlestae).

Eschatology, in relation to creation and the kingdom of God, was for a long time a neglected field in contemporary theology. The arrogant phrase of Ernest Toeltsch "Das eschatologische Bureau ist meist geschlossen" (The bureau of eschatology is closed most of the time) was distinctly characteristic of the whole liberal tradition since the Age of the Enlightenment. Nor is this neglect for eschatological issues fully overcome in modern thought. Modern humankind is not concerned with the last events. This attitude of neglect was recently reinforced by the rise of theological existentialism. Existentialism claims to be itself an eschatological doctrine.

Events of history are eclipsed by the events of inner life. The Bible itself is used several times as a book of parables and patterns. History is no more than a passing frame. Eternity can be encountered and tasted at any time. History is no more a theological problem. But in the Bible there is

a comprehensive vision of history, a perspective of an unfolding time, running from a "beginning" (arché) to an "end" (têlos), and guided by the sovereign will of God towards the accomplishment of His ultimate purpose. Christian faith is grounded in events, not in ideas. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (325/381) is a historical witness, a witness to the saving or redemptive events, which are apprehended by faith as God's mighty deeds. This recovery of the historic dimension of the Christian faith was to bring the eschatological theme into the focus of theological meditation. The Bible and the Creed both point to the future. The biblical view opens into the future, in which new things are to be disclosed and realized. And the ultimate realization of the divine purpose is anticipated in the future, beyond which no temporal movement can proceed - a state of consummation. In the witty phrase of von Balthasar "Die Eschatologie ist der 'Wetterwinkel' in der Theologie unserer Zeit" (Eschatology is the "eye of the storm" in the theology of our time) (4).

The mystery of the last things lies in the primary paradox of creation. According to Brunner's understanding, the term "creation" in its biblical use does not denote the manner in which the world did actually come into existence, but only the sovereign Lordship of God. In the act of creation God places something totally other than Himself "over against" Himself.

Creation is an act of the Trinitarian action: the Father as eternal creation, the Logos (Son) and the Spirit as co-creators are consubstantial hypostases in the communion of the Trinity. But creation is primarily the manifestation of God's will, and not of His essence; of His infinite goodness and purpose to make all creatures participants in Him with proportionate delight so that "He Himself might enjoy His works, seeing His creation rejoice and ever insatiably sated on Himself the inexhaustible", as Maximus the Confessor (8th century) affirms (5). Consequently, time and creation are identical and both contain the purpose or the will of the Logos and of the Trinitarian God according to the degree of conformity of creatures with their particular purpose or the "logos" of their nature (6).

Creation is a dynamic and "energized" being, which Christ assumed in its fulness so that it may again act in accordance with its proper design, restoring the entire cosmos in a united harmony. The ultimate restoration, harmony and unity of the entire cosmos will be realized when the whole creation is re-united with the divine power of the Logos. Therefore, creation is sanctified through the presence and activity of the Triune God in it. In the Christian trinitarian perception, creation is not in any sense to be seen as standing apart from God as the deistic view asserts, nor to be confused with God as the pantheistic

view claims. Rather, creation, though other than God, and still in "bondage to decay and... groaning in travail" (Rom. 8:21-22), can be properly understood only in relation to Him as its creator, redeemer and sustainer (7). Following the Patristic tradition, the aim of Christ's incarnation was precisely to unite humankind in Himself by recreating Man (anthropos) as the true image of God, and this "second creation" is more advantageous and higher than the first (of Adam)(8). Therefore, creation and recreation, transformation or at least transfiguration are inseparable: the first creation by the Father through the Logos, and the recreation of the cosmos through the Father and the incarnate Logos, Jesus Christ.

Maximus the Confessor affirms very strongly that the kingdom of God is actual, daily life and deification (theosis) in Christ, by grace and participation through the Holy Spirit, "kata metheksin", "te kata charin metheksen tou Pnevmatos" (10) because the kingdom of God is the kingdom of the Father and the Son as well as of the Holy Spirit (11). Certainly, this trinitiarian identification is also biblically supported (Lk. 11:2) and does not agree with the "futuristic eschatology" that implies passivity and inactivity in the Christian way of life.

Such a trinitiarian view and dimension of the kingdom of God is rooted in the New Testament as well as in the Patristic tradition, and is based primarily on the divine economy. Thus God's kingdom is not only a future or an apocalyptic event, but also an "inaugurated eschatology", or "continuous eschatology", or a "functional eschatology" that the kingdom be a soteriological experience of everyday life and the ultimate goal of history (13). The Christological, soteriological and pneumatological basis of the kingdom of God is particularly studied and pointed out by Maximus the Confessor. His teaching of synergy, kenosis and theosis is his main concern and is of fundamental importance for the understanding of the nature and application of God's kingdom in history and contemporary reality. History is a theandric process and movement in the sense that it is transformed through Christ's Lordship and grace from temporality to eternity. Hence, Orthodoxy understands history and this world as theocentric "inaugurated eschatology" (14).

God's kingdom is not only a future event, but is especially a daily, ongoing experience and process in many different forms, degrees and happenings. The divine kingdom is neither territorial nor chronological. It is rather an ever-present and endless enjoyment of God's eschaton and purpose of the whole creation for the saved ones or the inner life of humankind freed from the tempting and destructive forces of the present world.

On the other hand, although the kingdom of God is also a daily activistic personal experience, it is beyond and above time simultaneously, without beginning or end, since God Himself is without beginning and without end. The "end" depends not only on the total sovereignty of God in this world, but also on humankind's active participation in the event of the "inaugurated" kingdom of God in our history; God is the main protagonist and Lord of this history, and not humankind. The kingdom has been inaugurated, but it has not yet come in its full power and glory. Or rather, the kingdom is still to come - yet the King has come already.

The followers of absolute or autonomous humanism over-emphasize the earthly nature of God's kingdom and over-estimate the value and ability of fallen humanity, overlooking the essential theocentric, christocentric and pneumatocentric character of the kingdom of God. Therefore, the kingdom of God is both a present and future divine reality, a historical and at the same time an eschatological experience, and the deeper meaning and ultimate purpose of history is its fulfilment and consummation.

There is no doubt that the kingdom of God, as absolute and perfect reality, belongs because of its nature to the future and to the fulfilment of the ages. However, neither dualism nor interruption are implied in the nature of God's kingdom as present and future reality. The "end" or the "fulfilment" of the ages must be conceived only historically, because eschatologically and by its very nature the kingdom of God is endless and timeless. And the kingdom is one and the same, namely that "of Christ and of God" (tou Christou ke Theou) (Eph. 5:5) (15). Jesus Christ will give it back to God the Father, from whom He received it, at the consummation of time, at the "new "resurrection. There is no polarization between our history and the eschatological kingdom of God. Because, at the very end, the entire creation (è kath'olou ktisis) will be restored and will return to the pre-fallen condition and to the eternal glory of God (16).

In another perspective, a substantial foretaste of the eschatological kingdom is given precisely in the eucharistic participation. The sacrament of Eucharist is the eschatological event and the redemptive sacrament par excellence, the liturgy of the kingdom of God and of eschatological reality and unity with God and with humankind, since its participants share in the entire theanthropic life of Christ, in His death and resurrection, and are united with His body.

The eucharistic event is the testimony of the eschaton of Christ's redemptive work (17). The Eucharist, however, is not to be identified with the "future age" of the kingdom of God, since even its soteriological and eschatological experience is only a "betrothal" and a "foretaste" of the

eternal and perfect kingdom of God. Furthermore the eucharistic liturgy has a universal and cosmic significance. It is celebrated for the whole world, the whole creation and humanity.

Because Christ, as the New Adam, has transformed the fallen creatures into a new and authentic humanity, the microcosmic creation into the macrocosmic unity of humankind. Thus, creation may be called the "kingdom of glory", the "new kingdom of God".

The Church, on the other hand, as "communion of the Holy Spirit", assumes eschatological significance and prepares the way for establishing the kingdom of God in history within the whole creation, since both the Son and the Spirit operate inseparably in the history of the divine economy.

The Church itself, however, is not the plêroma of God's kingdom, but only its "betrothal" and "initiation" or "foretaste" (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5) (18). Thus, the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and of the faithful community at large becomes the most essential synthesis of history and eschatology of the present and future of the kingdom of God, since the Holy Spirit Himself is the very kingdom of God as well, as His presence testifies to the unquestionable "initiation", to a "betrothal" with God's kingdom.

This synthesis precisely restores the ontological unity, harmony and fulfilment of the entire cosmos and transforms physical death into immortality and brings them to eternity. Of course, the initiator, the Paradigm, and the leader of such a synthesis and transformation is Christ, the Logos of creation, and its recreator, who is the eschaton, the historical end (têlos), the fulness (plêroma) of God's kingdom.

FOOTNOTES

1. Cf. Joseph Pohle, Eschatology, adopted and edited by Arthur Preuss, Herder Book Co., St. Louis, Mo., and London, 1947, p. 2; see also the significant article of G. Florovsky, The Last Things and the Last Events, originally appeared in Theology of Emil Brunner, ed. by C.W. Kegley, New York, Macmillan Co. 1962, pp. 207-224.

2. See Kittler's Theologisches Wörterbuch, vol. III, pp. 451, 452.

3. Ignatius, Ephes., 20, 1.

4. Hans Urs von Balthasar, Eschatologie. Fragen der Theologie heute, Feiner, Trüsch, Böckle eds., Zürich/Köln 1958, pp. 403-421.

5. Cf. Maximus the Confessor, Capitate de caritate (Char), III, 46, p. 181; IV, 1,2,3,4 (pp. 192-193) (English transl. with intr. by Polycarp Sherwood. Westminster, Md: Newman Press, 1955); Mystagogia (Myst) 13, P.G. 90, 692D; see also H.G. Soteropoulos, Critical text with intr., Athens, 1978, p. 228 (in Greek).

6. Ibid., Quaestiones ad Thalassium (Thal), P.G., 274BC; Orationis Dominicae Brevis Expositio (Pater), P.G. 90, 873CDf, 901CDf; Ambiguorum Liber (Amb), P.G. 91, 1077CD, 1137ABf, 1164BC.

7. Confessing One Faith. Towards an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as Expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), Faith and Order Paper No 140, WCC, Geneva, 1987, para. 80, p. 33.

8. Cf. Maximus the Confessor, Pater, P.G. 90, 877BCf; Capita Theologica et Oeconomica (Th Ec), P.G. 90, 1196CD, 1324CD; Thal, P.G. 90, 520 CD; Amb 4, P.G. 91, 1054BC; 804BC.

9. Ibid., ThEc 2,69, 1156C; Myst 13, 692D; Pater 905Df.

10. Ibid., Pater, P.G 90, 876CDf; cf. Lk. 22:29; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 11:15; Col. 1:13.

11. Ibid., Pater, 876CDf; 884BC; 885B; 905Df; ThEc 4, 10, 1308B; Capita alia (Cal) 208, 1449C.

12. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, On the Lord's Prayer, 3, P.G. 44, 1157-1160.

13. Cf. Mt. 3:2; 4; 10:7; 12:28; Lk. 11:20; Jn. 12:31-32; Mk. 1:15. The best studies on the Kingdom of God as current reality according to Jesus and the New Testament are: N. Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, Philadelphia, 1963; C.H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom of God, London, 1935 and Fontana Books, 1963.

14. Cf. G.P. Patronos, The Relationship between Present and Future in the Kingdom of God according to the Eastern Orthodox Theology, Athens, 1975, pp. 72-73, 81 (in Greek).

15. Cf. Maximus the Confessor, Pater, P.G. 90, 893 BC; Myst 24, 713B.

16. Ibid., Amb, 1369ABf.

17. Nicolas Cabasilas, De Vita in Christo 4, P.G. 150, 585B; John of Damascus, P.G. 95, 1433C.

18. Cf. John Chrysostom, P.G. 52, 407f; Basil the Great, P.G. 31, 484; De Spiritu Sanc. 19, 49, P.G. 32, 157B.

DOES THE WORLD HAVE A FUTURE?

Patricia Wilson-Kastner

At first glance posing the question of the world's future seems either preposterous or pretentious. Perhaps it is, but it is also essential to our understanding of the integrity of creation. What is creation in its present reality, and what is God's intention for its future? I can give no clear and certain answers about the creation and its future, but I would like to sketch some of the essential elements which, from the perspective of one Christian feminist, must be a part of any further considerations of the integrity of creation, and the relationship of that theme to issues of peace and justice.

God's Inter-relationship with Creation

From a Christian perspective, any inquiries or concerns about the world and our role as human beings are rooted in an appreciation of our relatedness because we are all God's creation. Christians have always appreciated that "creation" designated the world and humanity as made by and dependent on God. By and large we Christians have been much less aware of the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation. Our theologies, and our practical pieties, gave the impression that God had made the world as a stage for us, and a source of things for us to use, but that the world had no integrity of its own without us.

Anthropocentric theology

Over the last few years people with different theological perspectives have identified the ways that the Jewish-Christian traditions have formed a world view which offered little attention and respect to non-human creation. For centuries, God's command to humans in Genesis 1 to "have dominion over the earth and subdue it" was interpreted to regard creation as a thing to be used. Even when the natural world was regarded more positively, it was usually only in terms of human utility. Developments in the last few centuries have even further objectified our attitudes in the West towards nature.[1]

The deep-seated patriarchy of the dominant culture in the West supported its assumption that it is entitled to "use" nature as it needs for its own purposes. One of its fundamental axioms is that God made rational, superior beings (white male humans) to rule and govern inferior humans (women and children) and to manipulate non-human nature (animal, vegetable, and mineral) according to their superior vision. In this world view, dominant males were given their authority by God (who in the iconography looked very much like them) to order and govern the various

inferior beings in a universe which God had created to be hierarchical and patriarchal. The envisioned future was a time when all would be perfectly subordinated to the rule of the earthly patriarchs (the wealthiest and most powerful of the males), and each performed its appointed task or function.

Today many people, East or West, first, second, or third world, agree that such an anthropocentric [androcentric] world vision is inadequate and destructive. With discoveries in the physical sciences we are becoming increasingly aware of the equality between women and men, of connections between humanity and animals, and of a fundamental unity of all reality, whether we popularly call it living or non-living.[2] From different perspectives, feminist writers and representatives of native peoples in various countries have reminded us of their traditional awareness of interconnectedness of all reality, and the unfortunte consequences of denying our relationships.[3]

In this latter part of the twentieth century contemporary Christians seek a theology of interconnectedness, a theology which expresses an intrinsic relationship among all created beings, and a real relationship to God. Process theology (in Anglo-American and French variations), theologies of various indigenous peoples, along with some feminist liberation theologies, are seen by many to offer substantial possibilities for constructive visions.[4] These approaches do not merely offer a few more ideas for us to consider; they are among the "deep stream" paradigms to which Dr. Rajotte has called our attention, those fundamental reassessments by which we try to radically change our visions of the world.[5]

Changing our vision of the world involves a humble openness to other perspectives beside our own, as well as a willingness to look again at our own Biblical tradition to see how well we have read or misread it. For a few moments, let us consider some elements of the Biblical tradition. Undeniably the Biblical stories express the perspective of the people of Israel and of the New Israel, the church, in its relation to God. Its focus is our story, our history. But even in the Scriptures we have some glimmers of a vision of a creation in which we are a part, and which has some integrity of its own, not just in our service or use.

In the accounts of creation in Genesis 1-3, humanity is a part of a greater whole: in the first account, humans are made in God's image to exercise God-like care towards creation, and in the second, to know creation in its essence (by naming it). In Gen. 10:8-17 the covenant is not only between Noah and God, but between Noah, his family, and all living things. In the Psalms (e.g. 19, 93, 103, 104) we hear about birds and animals which praise the Lord, heavens which praise God, rivers raising their hands to God, and the heavens proclaiming God's saving justice.

The Wisdom tradition speaks of all of creation as a living reality which is made by God and returns praise to God, (e.g. Job 7:12, 38:7). In Wisdom 18 the sage reflects on the way in which at the exodus creatures obeyed God's command to aid the Israelites escaping from the Egyptians. In other passages we read of animals doing God's bidding (e.g. Num. 22:22-35; Jonas 2). One might just dismiss all of these and other references as mere metaphors, but that seems far too shallow.

At the very least all of the references to non-human creation praising and serving God indicate that creation is not made for humanity, but is also created by and for God, with some measure of relative autonomy as well as interdependence with humans and other creation. For instance, when God questions Job about creation, God does not speak of creation in relation to humanity, but rather praises its power, beauty, strength, and its connection to God. This powerful poetry about creation is not anthropocentric in its vision of creation. The creator God of Job relates to the whole cosmos as though it had an integrity of its own, and as though creatures were in some way capable of relation to God.

The book of Job tries to put humanity's wrestling with its experience of evil in the context of humanity as part of a far greater whole. Job's struggle is placed in perspective of God's relationship to all of creation, of which humanity is only a part. Some of Job's humility comes from his learning that God's concerns and cares are for the entire cosmos, not only with humanity.

In the New Testament we find less direct reference to the whole of creation. The Gospels are focused on Jesus' healing and restoring of the broken human condition. Much of the attitude towards all creation can be gathered from the context of Jesus' own Jewish world and the theology of the Hebrew Bible. In some of the other New Testament material further questions about creation are raised in perspective of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Pheme Perkins in Resurrection notes that in its original biblical context, resurrection expressed an apocalyptic vision of God's vindication of the just. But in the experience of and reflection on Jesus' resurrection, Christians came to understand his resurrection as central to the history of Israel, God's relationship with all humanity, and the restoration of the cosmos.[6] The resurrection became the key not only to understanding the significance and reality of human life individually and corporately, but also of all creation. All creation has its relationship to God and its interconnection to one another in the risen Christ. Furthermore, its future and humanity's future, are centered in the risen Christ.

The Resurrection: the New Creation

Perhaps because we speak so often about the resurrection, in liturgy and theology, we forget what a shock it was in its context. For those Jews who believed in resurrection, it was an event to occur at the end of time, through which God would vindicate the just and punish the evil. In the Graeco-Roman world resurrection was an absurdity. Immortality of the spirit was acceptable, but resurrection of the flesh, now or later, was a disgraceful exalting of inferior matter.

But when Jesus appeared on Easter morning, he upset everybody's expectations, compelling his followers to see the world in a radically new way. In particular, the resurrection of his body and promise of future resurrection of others suggest a transformation of the way in which we humans are to relate to the whole physical world to which we belong. This transformation includes a greater value given to the visible creation in its corporality, and in the hope for human future with the rest of the cosmos.

Renewing Creation

In the New Testament as a whole, the resurrection of Jesus does not mark an apocalyptic end of our world, although some of those elements remain in the Gospels. Jesus' resurrection is not an end but the inauguration of a new creation; it is the sign of God's redemption and transformation of the visible, created world. God did not make the heavens and earth with its inhabitants, and then give immortality to the souls of just people. Rather, the world and those who dwell in it are redeemed.

Although we commonly maintain that the Hebrews understood humans as a whole and did not divide them into body and soul, Jesus and his contemporaries knew of this possibility from Greek thought and from certain strains of later Wisdom literature (Wisdom 3:1-3, 9:13-15). The absence of such references in the New Testament suggests the New Testament authors believed that this perspective would be impossible to sustain in light of faith in the resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection was not of a disembodied spirit, but of the whole person, including the physical, bodily aspects. The empty tomb accounts (Matt. 28:1-8; Mk. 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-10; John 20:1-10) all contain testimony to Jesus' resurrection as a living person - "he is not here" implies the necessity of body to Jesus' reality. Accounts of his appearances (Matt. 28:9-28; Luke 24:13-53; John 20:11-21:23) stress the bodily reality of Jesus. People touch Jesus, grab him, feed him fish. At the same time, Jesus' body does things his body previously had not been able to - sometimes he disguises himself, he can transport himself quickly, walk through walls.

Jesus' resurrected body is truly physical, but acts in the world in a new, less invasive way. Furthermore, Jesus' resurrection is not his alone; we also are able to share in his resurrection (e.g. Rom. 6:5-6). Resurrection has a "yet but not yet" character; resurrection is not yet perfected in us because death has not yet been fully overcome in us. But by entering into the mystery of Christ's suffering and death, we also will be transformed in Christ. Our bodies also will be raised and transformed as Christ's has been (1 Cor. 6:12-20; Rom. 6:8-14; I Thess. 4:15-18). Not only can human bodies share in Christ's risen life; all things will ultimately be subjected to God (1 Cor. 15:35-49).

Ultimately, resurrection is not simply a new relationship between Jesus and the believer, or even the human community and Christ, but a transformation of all visible reality into a cosmic unity. In Romans 8 Paul writes about the whole creation sharing with humanity in "frustration" and looking forward with humanity to being brought into the "same glorious freedom, [i.e. physical and moral freedom from corruption] as the children of God." (18-21) Both Col. 1:20 and Eph. 1:9-10 speak of Christ as the one in whom all things hold together and in whom all things are reconciled. In Rev. 21:1-5 a different but equally cosmic vision of a new heaven and a new earth is revealed.

The importance of this cosmic interconnection suggests that Christians are not called to understand and practise ecology/stewardship because these are prudent or civilized. We care for all of creation because we are interconnected with it, it is imperfect and fallen with us. In Christ we and it, all of us together, are healed and reconciled and offered a future. Jesus Christ is the redeemer of protazoa and puppy-dogs, as well as of human beings. Our human future with God rests in a cosmic reconciliation in Christ.

Resurrection as a Sign of Hope

Because all creation, not just humanity, is joined as one in the risen Christ, all creation, not just humanity, has a future in God through Christ. All creation shares in our hope. Nature in all its complexity: "red in tooth and claw", victim of our abuse and wastefulness, in the luxuriousness of unfettered growth - this nature with us hopes for risen life in Christ.

We do not know what this life will be like, any more than we know what it will be for us. Sharing in Christ's risen life is our hope. "...[In] hope not visibly present, or we should not be hoping. People do not hope for that which they can already see. But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence." (Rom. 8:24-25) We learn from the New Testament

that we hope for a future together, which cannot be destroyed by death within or death without.[7] The Pauline writings particularly insist that the resurrection offers hope for all creation to be restored and redeemed in Christ, transformed as we humans also will be transformed (1 Cor. 15:20-28; 2 Cor. 5:14-19; Col. 1:15-20).

In the New Testament an apocalyptic strand of thought can still be found. It assumes that all of creation, with humanity, will be destroyed suddenly and soon through God's avenging judgment (2 Thes. 2; 2 Pet. 3:10-12; Rev. 21:1-5). But the other and more integral approach suggests that humanity and creation are interconnected in a history which is developing according to its own integrity. God will not violently intervene to destroy the world and then reconstruct it, but is present in the world's life to shape, direct, and perfect it (Romans 8, esp. 24-25; 2 Cor. 5:10).

This second approach, more organic and attuned to humanity with the rest of creation as a developing connected reality, involves us in a long process, of which human history is one ongoing dimension (e.g. Matt. 25 contains parables of a long continuing process; Rom. 11 looks forward to a long history before God's purposes in time are completed.) Much of the biblical imagery of God as mother emerges from such a vision of God's relationship to the world.[8] This process involves a development in which we and all the rest of creation have a part. Christ's resurrection gives a "clear and certain hope" that we will be redeemed and have eternal life; but our behavior and interaction with other parts of creation shapes the way our future will look. God will not, these passages suggest, give us a future unrelated to our past. We are growing and maturing, the entire cosmos together. On the one hand, even if we act as death's agents against creation, we cannot annihilate it or ourselves. But we can twist, distort and wound our world. Those wounds, transformed and glorified as were the wounds of Christ, will be just as much a part of the world in its risen life as are our nurture and care.

Ethics of Christian Life in the Risen Christ

How might we be able to act as responsible members of creation if the reality of Jesus' resurrection becomes the centre of our faith and our life? It would be presumptious to attempt to answer such a broad question, but here are a few suggestions for humans who live in a world in which we all await the fullness of our freedom in Christ.

Humble Acknowledgement of Creation's Integrity. The history of salvation (Heilsgeschichte) is the story of the cosmos. As we recount the events which constitute our existence in this world, a full history is not just about Christians, Christians and Jews, humanity, or even all sentient beings. From our perspective we acclaim the saving deeds of God involved in the life of all that is. We try to rid ourselves, as much as we can, of thinking of ourselves as the only ones who have a story, or the only ones who matter to God.

All creation matters to God, and all our stories are woven together as one. We have for hundreds of years deluded ourselves into thinking that only humanity had worth to God, and all the rest of creation was here only to serve our ends. At the heart of any change of behaviour is our conversion from self-centred humans to ones who seek to listen to the story of other beings with the same kind of respect that we accord our own. In the context of our lives together we will enter into their perspectives, needs, and goals; ask how they are enslaved and how God wishes them to become free in view of our common life; and share and rejoice in their redemption.

Stewardship and Ecology. Lest all of this insistance on the integrity of creation and its place in Christ's risen life be taken as sentimental drivel, we need to place these aspirations in perspective. We are all bound together, connected in one whole of which the risen Christ is the heart and soul. In Gen. 1, we read that God made humanity in the divine image, to exercise dominion over creation, that is, to nurture and care for creation as God does for us. All is made in Christ and all is redeemed in Christ. We are not an aggregate of individuals, but a community of life.

Any ethics needs to begin with our interconnectedness. We can call this ecology, but perhaps the term "stewardship" is more helpful. All creation is God's household. In the past, we have been too anthropocentric, but we do have a particular role as human beings. Now we are called to live with other created beings as a household together. We are stewards of a community. We are called to care for the whole household of God, to live in a way which respects our integrity as humans, and nurtures the whole household (Luke 16:1-13; 1 Cor. 4:1, 9:17; Eph. 1:10, 4:29; 1 Pet. 4:10). We are beginning to understand something about ecology, the prudence of living together in a world of limited resources. We have barely begun to explore stewardship, the art of nurturing all creation as made and redeemed in Christ, with its own proper share in a common future in God.

What might this mean for our approach to agriculture, acid rain, armaments? What difference does it make that as we interact with non-human creation (from rocks to rooks) we are helping to shape our and their eternal future? How does their interaction with us affect them and us? What difference does the hope of the resurrection make for the dodo or the stegasaurus? (In a sense, we are asking on a cosmic, or at least global scale, the kinds of questions Augustine asked about human history in Civitas Dei.)

Peace and Justice. We are becoming accustomed, even if somewhat uneasily, to the notion that justice and peace for all humanity are given us by God as intrinsic elements of the Gospel, not just additions by socialist do-gooders. If we take seriously that everything is being restored in Christ, and that through Christ's resurrection, all creation awaits the liberty of the children of God, we will be convinced that justice and peace are God's intention for the cosmos, not only for us. We will act as though all human decisions and actions in the non-human as well as the human world are bound by God's standards of justice and peace.

We will be able to sing with enthusiasm and honesty the hymn of creation which awaits God's saving justice to redeem it:

> Let the sea thunder, and all that it holds,
> the world and all who live in it.
> Let the rivers clap their hands,
> And the mountains shout for joy together.
>
> At the approach of God, who is coming
> to judge the earth.
> God will judge the world with saving justice
> and the peoples with equity. (Ps. 98:7-9).

FOOTNOTES

[1] D.S. Wallace-Hadrill, The Great Patristic View of Nature (NY: Barnes and Noble, 1968); Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980); Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978).

[2] E.g. Nick Herbert, Quantum Reality (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985) explores the physical interconnections of reality; Paul and Anne Ehrlich, Extinction: the Causes and Consequences of the Disappearance of Species (New York: Ramdom House, 1981) considers the interconnection of the species; The Global 2000 Report to the Presidednt of the U.S., Gerald O. Barney, Study Director (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980) identifies and briefly examines contemporary environmental issues and governmental policies.

[3] E.g. Rosemary Ruether, New Woman/New Earth (NY: Seabury, 1975); Grace Jantzen, God's World. God's Body, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984); Jamake Highwater, The Primal Mind (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

[4] Alfred North Whitehead's Process and Reality (New York: Free Press, 1929, 57) is still basic for understanding Process Theology. The work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, e.g. The Future of Man (New York: Harper and Row, 1984, 69), Hymn of the Universe (New York; Harper and Row, 1961, 65). Contemporary articulations are found in the Report and Background Papers, Meeting of the Church and Society Working Group, Glion, Switzerland, September, 1987, Prof. Charles Birch, "Chance and Purpose in Evolution," "Salvation for Elephants," pp. 60-81; Prof. Jay McDaniel, "God and Pelicans," "Life Centered Ethics in Christian Perspective," pp. 82-132.

[5] In the Glion report, Ibid., Dr. Freda Rajotte, "A Christian Alternative to the Dominion of Nature," pp. 133-139.

[6] Pheme Perkins, Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984) pp. 25-26.

[7] Perkins, Ibid. insists that restoration of community as "presence to each other and to the Lord" is central to the earliest Christian understanding of resurrection (p. 435).

[8] Leonard Swidler, Biblical Affirmations of Women (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) pp. 21-36; Phyllis Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), pp. 31-59.

CREATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Kjell Ove Nilsson

Introduction

Disarmament is a sign of the kingdom of God!

The kingdom of God is at hand when unemployment is overcome, when transnational companies are defeated, when peace is achieved, when human rights are maintained in a world of warfare and injustice.

Such somewhat simplistic statements are heard quite often. They are certainly not new. The old "liberal" theology and the proclamation of a "social gospel" frequently reasoned like that. Some of the strongest critics of the World Missionary Conference in Bangkok 1973 voiced very harsh comments with regard to a similar understanding of the theme of that conference: "Salvation today". Salvation, like the kingdom, should not - they said - be interpreted simply in immanent, inworldy terms, as if everything good accomplished in this world could be seen as signs of progress for the kingdom of God. On the other hand it is even worse to think that this kingdom is something only abstract and remote, without any real connection to this earth and the concrete everyday life of people.

This tension we will have to keep in mind also when dealing with today's topic about "Creation and the Kingdom of God". Of course, we also remember the famous words by Jesus himself: "My kingdom does not belong to this world" (John 18:36). We know that he resisted the temptation to rule "all the kingdoms of the world" (Matt. 4:8) or directly to be made "a king by the people" (John 6:15).

The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, that is obvious also in the teachings of the Apostle Paul. He says, for example, in 1 Cor. 4:20: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of words but of power", and in Romans 14:18 he makes it very clear: "For God's kingdom is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of the righteousness, peace and joy which the Holy Spirit gives".

Yet it is in this world, in the midst of God's creation, that the kingdom of God will be launched, will take place, will be rooted and realized - at least partly and to begin with. Only so is it possible for human beings to be part of it. Only so, in human earthly forms and appearances came Jesus himself to inaugurate and introduce the coming of the kingdom. This understanding of the kingdom corresponds to the situation of the disciples: on the one hand they do not belong to the world, on the other hand Jesus does not ask his Father to take them out of the world - only to keep them safe from the Devil - rather he actually sends them into the world (John 17:14,18).

It is decisively important clearly to keep this ambiguity in mind, whenever the kingdom of God is to be discussed. The term "world" is apparently ambiguous as is "creation", signifying both the good world God created and wanted, and the world as it turned out to be through and after the fall, when "the whole world is under the Evil One" (1 John 5:19).

"World" and "creation" are of course not identical, although both can be understood in a variety of ways. When we speak of "creation" we use a concept which normally is more comprehensive and inclusive than the concept of "world" in its general meaning. With this background we will now go on to an analysis of our main theme. This will be done in several steps, but briefly because of limited time.

1. The Kingdom and the Trinity

There is an obvious risk to make the subject before us too small. In particular the notion "The kingdom of God" is easily interpreted in a too narrow and superficial manner. How do we then describe the realm of the kingdom, the "area"? Where are the boundaries in space and time? When does it start and end?

This discussion is not often carried through, if ever at all. Some would suggest that God's kingdom begins with the covenant between the people of Israel and that God who liberated the people out of the slavery in Egypt. So, for example, John Bright in his important monography on "The Kingdom of God", when speaking of the Exodus: "The notion of a people of God, called to live under the rule of God, begins just here, and with it the notion of the kingdom of God"[1].

Or one simply puts down a borderline at the arrival of Jesus. This, for example, is how even Ernst Käsemann could be understood in his well-known lecture at the Melbourne World Missionary Conference in 1980: "As Christ's kingdom, the royal reign of God begins on earth as the kingdom of the crucified, which places his disciples with him under the cross."[2] This statement has, however, as others, quite a few qualifications which prevent us from describing his view as a simply christocentric understanding of the kingdom of God. Even if "the inauguration of the royal reign of God" is seen as "a saving event" in Jesus[3], the Melbourne theme "Your Kingdom Come" still means, according to Käsemann, "that we also have to include within this theme the whole Bible, all our traditions and hopes, and even world history"[4].

These are just some examples to indicate already now the dynamic nature of the kingdom - and the risk of a too short perspective, a too clear-cut and closed definition.

The kingdom of God did not start with Abraham or Exodus, or with Jesus, or with the Church, although all these points in the history of the world - and of salvation - are significant steps in the eschatological coming forth of the kingdom, from eternity to eternity. So did the kingdom then begin at the dawn of creation? No, and not afterwards, through Israel or the Church. Rather it began **before** all time and all creation, if that is comprehensible at all. That is the reason why I suggest a basic trinitarian approach to the understanding of the kingdom, both **ad intra** and **ad extra**.

This is not the time and place to develop a trinitarian theology at this point. The notion of a kingdom of God must, of course, be rooted in the Trinity itself. It must by definition stand in an intrinsic, indissoluble relation with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To say anything else should mean to cut short the significance of the kingdom, to relativize its impact, and to limit its rule and realm in space and time.

The kingdom is much more. It is an expression of God's sovereignty in all ways. It is an expression of the Father's creative activity as the Lord of creation. It is the kingdom of the Son which "does not belong to this world", but to the eternal world of the life of the Trinity. And it is the kingdom already at work here and now in the Spirit - in both the world and the Church - manifest in time but based in the inner-trinitarian relationship of love.

But it is only in God's creational, incarnational and spiritual involvement directly in this world that the kingdom is revealed to human beings, is made known and available through God's own interference. It is therefore highly relevant to look at the kingdom as part of creation, as an act of God in history, as a glimpse of divine engagement in the world's affairs, as an expression of the incarnation of the Son, and as God's presence in the Church and its sacramental life in the world. All of it is, however, founded and grounded in the trinitarian interplay, the intimate exchange and mutuality - the **perichoresis** - within the Godhead itself.

But what was hidden inside the Trinity came out to a certain degree through the revelation and incarnation in Jesus Christ. The kingdom **is** from an ontological point of view in God from eternity to eternity, it is by nature eschatological, the fully accomplished dominion of God - and as such it belongs to the future (as well as the past). The kingdom is a process, coming incarnationally in creation and world, revealing itself more and more, at this very moment, at the same time as it is more hidden than ever.

The created world itself is the result of the will of God accomplished by the activity, the **energeia**, of the Trinity. In the Nicene Creed we confess that God the Father is "the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible", the Son is "He through whom all things were made", and the Holy Spirit the "Creator of life". Thus, the creation is the fruit of the common action of the Trinity, the three persons together out of the one essence in close cooperation and communion, the **koinonia**, of the Trinity. "The community of three Persons participates actively in the execution of the whole of God's plan."[5]

So also is God's kingdom the expression of God's triune activity. That implies that in a certain sense it is already present. The life and death and resurrection of Jesus is the best evidence that the kingdom is already here, made real by him. The synoptic teaching clearly lays claim to the fact that Jesus is not only the bringer of the **news** of the kingdom: he is **himself** the bringer of the kingdom, and in some sense the kingdom itself - the kingdom made manifest, visible and tangible here on earth.

Yet the kingdom was present long before, in the creation, in the history, before the historic appearance of the Son, the second Person in the Godhead. The idea of the kingdom and of God as the King is prevalent in many Old Testament writings, not the least in the Psalms. What Jesus did was to interpret, to reveal, to teach, to preach - and to make concrete and alive what already was.

Therefore the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven (basileia tou theoru or ton ouranon) was often on the lips of Jesus. It was a great theme of his teaching and many of his parables. His task was to call people to the kingdom and its salvation, to bring forward - for the benefit of humankind - what had been resolved in the Trinity from before time.

2. The Kingdom and the Church

Our subject has a particular emphasis on "creation". But from a theological point of view it is not possible to isolate that topic by itself. The idea of the kingdom of God cannot be dealt with only on the level of creation, simply because the understanding of creation is part of a total Christian view of all that is, in the light of the incarnation of Christ. Now to look at the role of the Church is therefore not a sidetrack but a necessary part of that main road along which we, according to my opinion, have to travel.

What then is the relationship between the kingdom of God and the Church, and how shall we describe this relation? Scholars have in general given three answers. Some have said that the kingdom and the Church are identical. Others, on the contrary, hold that the two are widely different. Then, thirdly, there is a mediating position, maintaining that even if the two entities are not regarded as identical, they are nevertheless always found in a very essential and close relationship to each other. This is the position usually held today, also by myself, for reasons which I want to clarify - in this context - in the following way.

If you take the two concepts to imply identical ideas, the Church is simply the realisation and manifestation of the kingdom in this world. With such an identification it is hard to see any independent part for creation in the life of the kingdom. The kingdom then is totally "churched", christianized and spiritualized. But, says Melbourne speaker Bishop John V. Taylor, "we must not define the kingdom of God in these narrow ecclesial terms"[6]. And John Bright makes it clear: "There is no tendency in the New Testament to identify the visible church with the kingdom of God" and then puts it in this expressive way: "The Church is indeed the people of the kingdom of Christ, but the visible church is not that kingdom."[7]

The kingdom is much more. "The Church has no monopoly on the kingdom of God"[8]. The Church is only a tool, a mission, a messenger - as the Melbourne conference labels it in its section III: "The Church Witnesses to the Kingdom"[9]. But on the other hand it is nothing less than that. That is why the second position is wrong too, making the Church only a kind of human construction, a sort of substitute for the kingdom - when the kingdom was not completed in an immediate **parousia**, as many expected in the early church, or when the proclamation of the kingdom was not as successful as was assumed. But the Church is not such an emergency solution which arose from disappointments invented by the theologizing of the disciples.

Rather the Church really is part of the kingdom of God, indispensable in God's salvation economy. Says John Bright: "In the service of the victorious and already present kingdom of God the church is given a joyful and triumphant task" - that is "proclaiming the kingdom in the entire world and summoning men to its rule"[10].

And this task also shows the connection between the creation and the Church. What began in the creation of the universe and the world with the many dealings of God with the whole race of humankind, was then pursued through the history of the people of Israel as the special servant of his purpose, and continued - after the focus was narrowed down to Jesus Christ - in the new Israel, the Church, and through that Church out into the world and the entire creation[11].

The Church is there to become the missionary people of the kingdom of God, sent to proclaim the new age, the restoration and renewal of the whole creation. "The Church was sent into the world as a missionary witness to a kingdom already set up."[12]

The Church then is not only a human organisation on earth, neither is it just an eternal heavenly kingdom. The kingdom of God and the first congregation of disciples are not identical, but the task of this congregation was from the very beginning to represent the kingdom of God in the world. The Church is sent into the world and into the old creation of God to introduce a new creation. The Church is the sign, the instrument and the firstfruits of the kingdom of God - the **sacramentum mundi**. It is, as is pointed out by Gennadios Limouris in his extensive and profound contribution in "Church - Kingdom - World", very difficult really to define the role of the Church in its "essential mystery" "as **experience** of the kingdom of God, as its epiphany in 'this world'"[13].

We can now discern the close connection between the Church and the kingdom of God and both their relation to creation and world. It is not a question of identity nor separation, but indissoluble relationship. It is like what Jesus says in the basic passage in Matt. 16:18-19 about building his Church, connected with the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The result of this analysis is in other words a kind of "both - and": Jesus both preached the kingdom of God and established his **ekklesia** in the first Christian community - which was immediately sent into the whole world to preach the kingdom to all creation. The Church therefore is the community of those who are experiencing the presence of the kingdom already now and at the same time are actively awaiting its final fulfilment, still to come.

3. The Kingdom of God and the Lordship of Christ

In the apostolic period the Church is an undeniable, concrete fact and this empirical reality is connected with an emerging doctrine of the Church. Again there is no identity of the Church and the kingdom of God. As a matter of fact there is not much said about the kingdom in the early Church, as it is portrayed in the Acts and the Epistles.

This can easily be demonstrated arithmetically: the concept of the kingdom occurs 120 times in the Gospels - particularly in the preaching of Jesus - in the rest of the New Testament only about 30 times. On the other hand, the notion of the Church appears rarely in the Gospels, actually only in Matt. 16:18 and 18:17, while it is frequent in the Epistles, about 110 times. In most cases it refers to

churches, that is local congregations, only a few times to the Church at large, the Church in the singular, the universal Church. Now it is certainly not altogether significant simply to count the number of **words**. The two concepts are in reality very closely related in the whole of the New Testament.

At the centre of the apostolic teaching is always Jesus Christ himself. In him is also - naturally - the key to understanding the relationship. With the message of Christ the kingdom of God is always made present, already here, "realized", and yet only coming, gradually, paradoxically, in a hidden way. The focus is on Christ. He is the One who rules **now**, the risen Lord in his Spirit, in his body, the Church. This thinking introduces a third concept, besides the kingdom and the Church, which in old dogmatics was called **regnum Christi**, the kingly rule or dominion of Christ, or better, the Lordship of Christ[14].

One of the oldest confessions of Christian faith consists of the three words "**Kyrios Jesous Xristos**", Jesus Christ is Lord. The kingdom of God is constantly awaited, but the interim stands under the rule of Christ. With this distinction and the introduction of the idea of the Lordship of Christ, it is possible to look at Jesus not only as the Lord of the Church, but as the Lord of the world, as the Lord of Creation as well - in the period between the day of resurrection and the last day of judgment.

In the present time all things are subjected to Christ (1 Pet. 3:22), under his Lordship, that is the whole visible and invisible world (Col. 1:16). In this interim of **regnum Christi**, all the power has been given to him both in heaven and on earth, and he is really the Lord of all (Phil. 2:9-10). He shall reign until he has delivered up all things again unto God the Father, when the Lordship of Christ will turn over everything to the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:24). But the kingdom does not come fully until the **parousia**. Then the task of the Church is fulfilled - and the kingdom of God an accomplished, perfect reality. Meanwhile everything is under the Lordship of Christ.

The Church and the **regnum Christi** have in common that they both belong to a limited period of time - unlike the kingdom of God. The Lordship of Christ exists right now. God has already saved us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his Son (Col. 1:13). This Lordship of Christ was apparent with his resurrection but was in effect already so from the earliest creation. It will end with his second coming. Of course, it is not possible to separate the Lordship from the kingdom, as impossible as it is to separate the Son from the Father. But eschatologically they are different[15].

The relation between the Church and the Lordship of Christ is naturally more intimate, and yet it is important also there to maintain the difference. The Lordship of Christ includes all of creation because everything is created in him and through him (John 1:3; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16f). But the Church is of course limited to the fellowship of those who believe in Christ. Everybody belongs to Christ, in the sense that they are created in and through him, but everybody does not belong to the Church, the **koinonia** of believers. And yet the Church is the centre of the **regnum Christi**.

So, in summary, the strictly limited focus of the Lordship of Christ in this world is concentrated on the Church, the earthly body of the incarnation of Christ, which is called forward and sent into the world by Jesus Christ himself, who is the head of the Church but also of the whole creation. And of all it is included and circumscribed by the kingdom of God.

According to the early church concept the Church represents the continuation of Jesus' historical activity. But the **full** consummation of the kingdom of God did not come then, neither with the work of Jesus in history, nor with the Church - up to this day. Its powers are at work both in the life of Jesus, in the Church, in the whole Lordship of Christ and through the ages. The Church participates in the dynamic and the paradoxes of the kingdom within history. The kingdom is revealed from the beginning - in a hidden way! - in creation, in history, in the work of Jesus, in the Church. It is present already and yet it is still to come. It is a cosmic universal concept, eschatologically in a state of being and constantly becoming. It is a dynamic entity - and reality - ever on the march, moving towards its eternal goal. Jesus founded the Church, and he did so as the preacher of the kingdom of God. Both belong to his prophetic - soteriological - eschatological activity.

These are not just flimsy thoughts and abstract speculation. It all became flesh in Jesus of Nazareth! The Son of God became man, the One who said - in the first commandment - "I am the Lord, your God" (Ex. 20:2), he who is the Word of God, was made flesh and sinner on this earth, in the midst of his own creation. In his person he is still the Lord, the Lord of creation, but in his life and work he is the servant and saviour of this same creation. Such is the Lordship of Christ. And here we must go on to the next chapter.

4. Creation and New Creation - In the Perspective of the Kingdom

In Christian faith the world is never totally autonomous, bound only to its own rules. And the creation is likewise never something totally objective, separate and independent, following only some inherent determination. This is also denied by modern natural science with regard to both macrocosmos and microcosmos. It is altogether God's creation, accountable to his righteous judgment but also open to his merciful action. Therefore it is still possible - in the midst of all the ambiguities of the creation - to experience the good gifts of the Creator - and of the Sustainer, the Saviour, the Sanctifier.

Again we have to maintain the Christian faith that the world was created by the one Triune God out of his love and goodness. And already in creation is the kingdom of God present and manifest, but yet only beginning a process towards the fulfilment of all God's plans - and yet also only hidden, concealed both in creation's own imperfected and accidental character, and in and under sin and evil powers. This hiddenness accounts for the contradiction and ambivalence in all of creation, where good things suddenly represent also bad and evil things, and where the good gifts of life also introduce dangers and threats to life - carrying with them the potentiality for death as well as for life.

It is under such paradoxical circumstances that the kingdom was launched and is still in process - in terms of creation. But in Jesus Christ it is carried along much further as God the Saviour provides a deepening revelation and explanation of what he as God the Creator has done. And even more: he shows a way out of the ambiguity, the slavery under sin and rebellion. In Christ the world is being redeemed and restored and renewed. In Christ there is a line drawn from the early creation through sin and reconciliation to renewal and new creation. All in the continuing process of the kingdom of God.

But the interrelationship between Jesus Christ, the creation and the kingdom of God is much more intimate. Because in the Incarnate, God the Father has made known his will as a plan for the fulness of time "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10).

The Lordship of Christ is again in focus. In Jesus Christ God the Creator has entered into the midst of his creation. The Creator may seem to be hidden from his creation, beyond the grasp of the human mind, but in Jesus - through whom everything has been made - this same Creator has become a creature. Without ceasing to be God he has in an irreversible and definite way made creation his home and habitation (John 1:14).

We must certainly not forget the "doubleness": the kingdom is "at hand" (Mark 1:15) and "among us" (Luke 17:21) and yet we have to pray: "Your kingdom come". The contradiction, the ambivalence and hiddenness are there, and yet also the realization of the kingdom here and now - discontinuity and yet continuation of the creational process from the beginning to the end. Sin, rebellion and a probable apocalyptic ending of human history, and yet victory in Christ, because he "has made the triumph of that kingdom sure". We dare say: "The victorious kingdom is thus no longer a passively awaited thing, but a dynamically active one"[23].

This coming of the kingdom now, the kingdom at hand, has to be understood in a most concrete way, incarnate, down to earth. Jesus not only introduced or announced the kingdom, he actually inaugurated it right here and now in his many actions. And so, in the words of Bishop John V. Taylor, he "called men to live the life of the kingdom in anticipation of its arrival"[24], not only in dreams and airy longings but in actual living. It means to live the future now. The future "is already pressing itself into the present world order to question and to change it". This life is a matter of a new perspective and an alternative life-style, in the common human world. "The kingdom arrives from beyond, yet it is this-worldly through and through"[25]. Or as Käsemann puts it: "The king of the heavenly kingdom is still travelling the roads of this world"[26].

Christ wanted, and wants today, his followers to live in the light of the kingdom, to live each day as if the end were tomorrow. This is the ethics of the kingdom, the ethics of the teachings and life-style of Jesus. This implies an "eschatological living"[27], which cannot simply be put into a reform programme to change society - nor can it on the other hand be postponed to some millenial kingdom to come. The life of the kingdom is to be lived here and now. That life-style cannot be lived on a religious island, providing special pious and favourable conditions. The people of the kingdom are not members of a sect outside of the earthly conditions of life in some general, abstract, "creation". They are rather workers, neighbours, men and women in different cultures, societies and nations. And so the kingdom is actualized and realized in a variety of manners and situations, in the midst of conflicts and suffering, injustice, hate and warfare. "So the life-style of the kingdom which the Church is called to live may never be disengaged from the dusty struggles and ambiguous aspirations of humanity"[28].

When we pray "Your kingdom come", we pray for a redeemed, a healed, a mended and renewed creation. The restoration and the renewal of the creation is a daily calling to all, in the announcement of the kingdom of God: the time is fulfilled and the kingdom is at hand! Therefore, it is time to repent and live according to the ethics of the kingdom. This has to be taken seriously in everything, in politics, in economics, in technology, in ecology, whatever we think of in terms of human life and conditions of creation.

The report from section III of the Melbourne Conference 1980, on the theme "The Church Witnesses to the Kingdom", states: "The kingdom is seen as an inclusive and open reality, stretching to include people irrespective of their sex, race, age and colour, and it is found in caring and fulfilling relationship and environments where people are reconciled and liberated to become what God wants them to be. It is not self-preserving but self-denying. The kingdom is found in the willingness to accept suffering and sacrifices for others... In the kingdom there is love, openness and respect for others"[29].

It is all included in the kingdom of God. The suffering servant, the crucified Lord - who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15) - defeats the tyrants and destroys the work of the devil on earth, causing a universal conflict, all in order to establish the kingdom of justice, peace and joy, inspired by the Holy Spirit and secured for ever (Rom. 14:17; Rev. 11:15). And we are all called to participate, living the future now: "We build God's kingdom: we are the architects not only of our own future but also of God's"[30].

The kingdom of God stretches all over and from the beginning to the end. Its horizons are incomprehensible, beyond time and space. When God and his kingdom enter this existence of ours - incarnationally - in the Lordship of Jesus, as it is apparent both in creation and through the Holy Spirit, both in the world and in the Church, then he who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, is coming into our world on earth. Once he came in person, in flesh, in the midst of our history, in humility and contempt, and once he will come again, evidently and again in person, but in majesty and glory. Then everything will be united in him and through him (Col. 1:18-20; Eph. 1:9-10). Within the limits of time there is an end to the Lordship of Christ, to creation, world, Church, everything that is.

But there is still a final note. The kingdom was "before" in God, the Triune God, and so "after" as well, from eternity to eternity. God put all things under the feet of Jesus Christ, he made him the head over all things and gave him a name above all other names (Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11). In him dwells all the fulness of God, of him who

fills all in all. "Then comes the end", says Paul in 1 Cor. 15:24 - yes, it is already "after" the end - when the Son delivers the kingdom to God the Father, after having destroyed all powers and principalities. So he gives history its meaning, the long history from creation to the **parousia**: he, Jesus Christ, was to reign as the Lord until he has put all his enemies under his feet, finally also death. Then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him - as Jesus had said: "I have been **given** all authority and power in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18).

Then the circle is closed. Paul concludes: "So that God may be everything to every one" (1 Cor. 15:28). That is the fulfilment of the kingdom of God. Then creation is liberated and new, there are new heavens and a new earth (2 Pet. 3:14). And our ecological worries are over. But until then ... let us join in a celebration from another conference on creation - also as a suitable conclusion:

"We celebrate the creation by the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, living in the Church and being present in the world. We are on our way to the promised land - the kingdom of God. It is, therefore, a way of witness, service and hope."[31]

FOOTNOTES

1. J. Bright, **The Kingdom of God**, Nashville 1953, p. 28.

2. E. Käsemann, **The Eschatological Royal Reign of God**, in: **Your Kingdom Come**, Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Geneva 1980, p. 64.

3. **Ibid.**, p. 62.

4. **Ibid.**, p. 61.

5. **Orthodox Perspectives on Creation**, Report from an Inter-Orthodox Consultation in Sofia, Bulgaria, 24 Oct. - 2 Nov. 1987 (mimeographed), p. 2, para. 3.

6. J.V. Taylor, **The Church Witnesses to the Kingdom**, in: **op.cit.**, Report, p. 134.

7. **Op. cit.**, p. 236.

8. J.M. Lochman, **Church and World in the Light of the Kingdom of God**, in: **Church - Kingdom - World**, ed. G. Limouris, Geneva 1986, p. 69.

9. **Op. cit.**, Report, pp. 193-207.

10. **Op. cit**, p. 232.

11. Cf. the mainline in Oscar Cullmann, **Christ and Time**, Philadelphia 1950.

12. J. Bright, **Op. cit.**, p. 233.

13. G. Limouris, **The Church as Mystery and Sign in Relation to the Holy Trinity - in Ecclesiological Perspectives**, in: **op.cit.**, p. 46.

14. This is well developed in Oscar Cullman (orig. German): **Königsherrschaft Christi und Kirche in Neuem Testament.**

15. Cf. E. Käsemann, **op. cit.**, pp. 62-63.

16. **Op.cit**, Report (mimeographed). p. 4, para. 12.

17. J.M. Lochman, **op.cit.**, p. 62.

18. J. Bright, **op.cit.**, p. 237.

19. **Ibid.**, p. 218.

20. J. Moltmann, **The Church in the Power of the Spirit**, New York 1977, p. 196.

21. G. Limouris, **op.cit.**, pp. 44-45.

22. **Ibid.** p. 45.

23. J. Bright, **op.cit.**, p. 237.

24. **Op.cit.**, p. 133.

25. **Ibid.**, p. 134.

26. **Op. cit.**, p. 64.

27. J. Bright, **op. cit.**, p. 223.

28. J.V. Taylor, **op. cit.**, p. 135.

29. **Op. cit.**, pp. 196-197.

30. J.M. Lochman, **op.cit.**, p. 59.

31. **The Doctrine of Creation and its Integrity - A Challenge to the Responsibility of Christianity Today**, Report from a Faith and Order consultation in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 13-20 November 1987 (mimeographed, FO/87:39(Rev.)), p. 9, para. 16.

PLANT BREEDERS' RIGHTS AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Richard G. Chambers

> And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth." And it was so.
>
> Genesis 1:11 (RSV)

Background/Social context

The United Church of Canada was founded in 1925, the result of an amalgamation of all the Methodist, Congregationalist, and three fifths of all the Presbyterian Churches in Canada. Since then it has been joined by the United Evangelical Brethren Church, and there have been ongoing negotiations with the Anglican Church in Canada and the Disciples of Christ. The result of such a broad (mainline) Protestant Church in a relatively small country has been the ability of the United Church to wield significant influence in society. During the 1930's the United Church led the social gospel movement providing the impetus for the formation of a third political party in Canada. The United Church's social activism has remained consistent over the years: the first woman was ordained to the order of ministry in 1936, it established a firm pro-choice position on abortion in the early 1970's and it is currently debating the ordination of self-declared homosexuals.

The United Church of Canada is historically associated with the white, Anglo-Saxon immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who developed Canada's rural economy. The church still reflects this rural bias. While 85% of Canadians live in urban centres of 30,000 people or more, 50% of United Church members live in towns of 2,000 or less[1]. Currently the rural segment of the church has been going through a painful period of transition as the economic viability of family scale farming has been undercut by the competitive edge of agri-business. This rural crisis has prompted a great deal of reflection regarding the relationship between humans and our environment.

Rural folks are finding there is little connection between their circumstances and their understanding of God. In response to this dilemma a national Rural Mission and Ministry Conference was held in November, 1987. Another response has been the introduction of the United Church mission study entitled, "Creation in Crisis: Rural Life in Canada and Africa." The study endeavours to share the stories of the rural church first among rural folk themselves and then with the urban constituency. Despite nostalgic talk of the unique support found in rural

communities, many farmers suffer silently, unaware that what they have experienced in isolation and silence is in fact a public, systemic pattern of injustice. The mission study has attempted to illustrate this by drawing a parallel between the experience of Canadian and African farmers, each spokes in the larger wheel of the world food system[2].

The first hesitant questions then, are being asked about how humans are interacting with creation and what God really hopes for the kingdom, i.e., is the escalating use of fertilizers and pesticides the only future for Canadian farming? Increasingly the United Church is exploring panentheism. Panentheism holds that God is involved in all aspects of creation, but not strictly identified with it, as opposed to pantheism where God is everything and everything is God. In North America this perspective is articulated best in the writings of Matthew Fox[3]. All this is a result of the growing realization that the current theological understanding and moral imperatives regarding humans and their environment are not keeping pace with technological capabilities. In order to emphasize sustained development, established agricultural patterns that pose a critical threat to the environment will have to be overhauled.

Into this slowly evolving period of theological and ethical reflection the Canadian government has injected the issue of Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR). In February of 1988 the government introduced Bill C-107 to protect the developers of new plant varieties. The United Church's response to PBR is a reflection of its faithful understanding of creation and the kingdom of God.

Identifying the Issue

PBR is the patenting of new kinds of seeds or plants. The breeders of these new plant varieties would have the right to collect royalties and set conditions for the sale of varieties they control. This would allow private companies to obtain a return on their investment in plant breeding. Farmers would require permission from the patent holder before commercially producing or marketing potential plants for up to 18 years.

In 1980 and 1983 PBR legislation was given first reading in Parliament. In both cases it died on the order paper due to a broad-based lobbying effort by farmers, consumers, international development agencies and Church Organizations. It is believed the government is now introducing the legislation as a condition of free trade in order to "level the playing field" with the United States where PBR are already in place.

The Agriculture, Fishery and Food Committee (AFF) of the United Church has taken a stand against Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR). The AFF is a group of clergy and lay people with demonstrated expertise in agricultural issues and charged with the mandate of bringing relevant, related issues before the church[4].

The AFF is largely relying on pragmatic arguments in its criticism of PBR. These arguments are becoming increasingly ineffective. The AFF contends that PBR will lead to increased production costs for farmers due to the initial royalty fee for seed and the burden of buying predetermined chemicals for cultivation. The increased cost to the producer would be passed onto the consumer not only at the supermarket, but in increased taxes to cover the cost of regulating plant breeders. These arguments are offered from within the present paradigm where creation is regarded as a means not an end. Within this framework the United Church appears reactionary, defending a position against the "proven" experience of countries where PBR are already in place.

Proponents of Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) feel the economic incentive of even a short-term protected patent will encourage more research endeavours which will result in greater benefits for all society. The AFF misgivings regarding this line of thinking hint at the possibility of an alternative paradigm. They fear that research, now largely conducted in public laboratories, will be superceded by strictly guarded private research motivated purely by profit. Eventually monopolies would emerge, controlled by transnational companies who would tie their seed development to specific fertilizers and pesticides. This would result in highly chemical dependent plant varieties. The AFF feels PBR may be the first step on the slippery slope to the patenting of all life. This certainly has been the experience in the United States where PBR was first introduced for plant varieties in the 1930's and now encompasses livestock, culminating in the patenting of the Harvard mouse on April 13, 1988. Though the AFF does not use this language they are essentially employing criteria of distributive ethics based on need as opposed to ability to pay. Somehow private owernship of the stuff of the earth's life does not tally with the ancient question, "Who is my neighbour?"

Proponents of PBR argue that as the only developed country in the industrial world without PBR protection Canada is losing many valuable opportunities. New plant varieties are seldom introduced in Canada because we will not protect new strains of plants developed in other countries. By the same token Canadian plant breeders are not protected anywhere so there is little stimulus for private development. There is economic pressure then, to integrate with the growing movement towards privatization.

The AFF is concerned that plant breeding is heavily dependent upon germplasm imported from principally Third World countries. Canadian agriculture benefits from this free exchange of material between countries. PBR would have the countries least able to afford seed paying for material they had originally supplied free of charge. This would mean developing countries would have to impose a price tag on their germplasm. In addition scientists from developing nations currently have access to public laboratories which would be threatened by any large scale move to private research. All this reflects thinking of the World Commission on Environment and Development which notes that the economy and ecology are becoming even more interwoven, locally, and globally, into a seamless net of causes and effects[5]. PBR would only seem to entangle this net further in the current, corrupt social structure of international relations where developing countries must sell their soul in order to survive. Not surprisingly the AFF finds that such thinking does not enjoy wide spread appeal. This points to the roots of the present ecological crisis in the economic organization of western society, and the dominant philosophy which underlies it.

The Agriculture, Fishery and Food Committee (AFF) of the United Church would be able to strengthen its position if it were to draw on the recent work of Church and Society at Glion, Switzerland, September 1987.[5] It recognizes that we need to move from a patriarchal society to an understanding of the kingdom of God embracing a more participatory democracy and spirituality which precludes the private control of creation. This would also fall in line with the reflections of the recent Faith and Order consultation in Porto Alegre, Brazil, November, 1987 where the sub-unit observed that one must continually fight against the divorce of economics and ecology[6]. Profits accrued with no recognition of cost to the world's population or natural environment is contrary to the Christian understanding of creation and hence the relationship between creation and the kingdom of God.

Strategies for Action

Articulating a number of arguments, most of which are based on an attempt to refute PBR on economic grounds with only a hint for the need of a new world view, the United Church has adopted a largely educational plan of action. The church is starting with its own members. An article on PBR placed in the national church magazine, and an information sheet sent to each congregation represents an important strategic first step. Many of the small plant breeders who would stand to gain the most from PBR are faithful United Church folk.

This reflects again the rural, middle class composition of the Church. The president of the Canadian Seed Growers Association, an organization made up of farmers who grow seed for sale to other growers, is a United Church member, in support of the legislation. Letters from members of the church continually indicate there is a problem regarding the position of the national church supports and what people perceive in their congregations. While science and technology confer the ability to threaten the very survival of the natural world, it is necessary to focus on the political and economic interests that set these processes in motion. Within the United Church we must start with our own constituency.

As well as identifying barriers the AFF has allied itself with other movements and organizations witnessing to a life affirming world. An umbrella organization, Genetic Resources for our World (GROW) now coordinates their public education efforts. GROW is made up of various churches, development agencies and the National Farmers' Union.

The AFF has lobbied the government, writing directly to the Prime Minister as well as the Minister of Agriculture. A resolution is currently before the church to make the AFF position official policy. In this way the Church could inject an authorative policy statement directly into the current public debate. PBR is currently at the committee stage where the government may ask for public briefs. The AFF is prepared to speak to the issue if the opportunity arises.

Evaluation

Should the government proceed with a third and final reading of Bill C-107 it would virtually become law with little anticipated public reaction. I believe the inability of the United Church to excite a greater concern around PBR is partially due to the lack of a credible theology of nature.

United Church theologian Douglas John Hall has lifted up in previous Church and Society writings the images of humanity as steward, priest, and poet in an attempt to help us reintegrate a biblical appreciation of creation intended in the kingdom of God.[7] These same images were noted at the Faith and Order consultation in Porto Alegre[8]. The meeting urged Christians to claim back the role of stewards, caretakers and priests of the created order. Unfortunately these symbols are rarely referred to in my experience of the United Church.

By stewardship Hall means solidarity, accountability and responsibility with and for creation. For too long the Christian heritage has been preoccupied with the soul, and the natural world relegated to a stage on which to play.

The earth has been treated as a limitless resource to be conquered rather than an entity within which to become integrated. The paradigm of mastery is anthropocentric. PBR is not regarded as a threat because it is perceived as merely the "natural" extension of the human control of creation. Even liberation theology has done little to correct this imbalance. Liberation thus far has meant freedom from other human oppressors. It now must be affirmed that the earth is languishing under human bondage. What is needed is an inclusive moral framework that recognizes that human freedom involves freedom for all life - we are all a part of the same biosphere. Only in this way can a biblical stewardship and nurture of God's creation take place.

Secondly, Hall calls us to the function of priest, characterized by the act of representation. Christians must no longer function in a patriarchal style where some will control the resources for all. This characteristic is so imbedded in western capitalistic society, that we find it hard to recognize, let alone refute, in PBR. In a post-patriarchal society we must promote methods of production and distribution based on need, not greed, at both the micro and macro level. The Report of the Orthodox Perspective on Creation held in November 1987 at Sofia, Bulgaria, affirms the need at the international level to challenge ancient economic structures and work towards cooperative economic enterprises, especially in the support of developing nations.[9]

This leads to Hall's third image, that of the poet. This symbol reinforces our theological understanding of the earth as living, evolving organism of which humans are an integral part. The evolution of species and the environment are tightly coupled. Humans are bound up in this process like the poet who is both author and audience together. Hall describes this process as willed, participatory creating. Christians are called to a new poetic understanding of community which involves all of God's creation. The poet lifts up the importance of inter-relatedness.

Conclusion

A brief analysis of the United Church's experience regarding proposed PBR legislation demonstrates a need for reflection around our theology of creation and the kingdom of God. The heritage of an anthropocentric relationship with nature is no longer tenable. A post-patriarchal understanding of God must be fostered which includes not only freedom of human beings from other human beings but the liberation of the entire creation from oppression. Only a theology that stresses the inter-relatedness and continuity of all life can begin to provide an effective critique of PBR.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The United Church of Canada Year Book, 1987.

[2] Mandate, Special Edition (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1987).

[3] The Observer, April 1987.

[4] General Council Committee of the United Church of Canada on Agricultural, Fishery, and Food. Minutes of 28-30 January, 1988.

[5] David Trickett, "Faith on Earth: Christian Witness and the Struggles for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" in Report and Background Papers, Meeting of the Church & Society Working Group, Glion (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1987), p. 141.

[6] "The Doctrine of Creation and Its Integrity - A Challenge to the Responsibility of Christianity Today", report of the Commission on Faith & Order, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 13-20 November, 1987, p. 4.

[7] Douglas Hall, "The Integrity of Creation: Biblical and Theological Background of the Term" in Reintegrating God's Creation (Church & Society Documents, No. 3, September 1987), p. 25-36.

[8] "The Doctrine of Creation and Its Integrity", p. 5.

[9] "Orthodox Perspectives on Creation" in Report, Inter-Orthodox Consultation held in Sofia, Bulgaria, 24 October - 2 November, 1987.

CREATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

George D Dragas

This brief communication provides only a basic outline of a string of thoughts relating to the subject-matter of this conference without supplying much biblical material or other traditional documentation. As such it is rather introductory, but, hopefully, useful for reflection and discussion.

It is clear to anyone involved in the recent theological dialogue which is promoted on the ecumenical platform of the World Council of Churches that the present topic is integral to the discussions which are being advanced on the two crucial fronts of ecclesiology and creation. This is especially apparent in several Faith and Order documents from Stavanger onwards.

In the case of ecclesiology the notion of the "kingdom of God" is both related to and distinguished from that of the Church. It is said that the Church is "the sign", or "a sign", of the "kingdom of God", but not identical with it, since this kingdom is yet to be revealed. It is not very clear to me in what has so far been said, whether the kingdom of God is conceived of as a purely future event, or whether it has a present connotation as well. Though the emphasis often lies on the future coming of it, there is also a sense that, somehow, the kingdom of God is in operation at the present as well. Its presence, however, is simultaneously concealed by and revealed through "signs", one of which is the Church. What this actually means, or how, exactly, this happens is not yet made very clear, because the "signs" which are basic to this happening are not clearly identified and in some cases, at least, they seem to be provisional and even transient. Thus, for example in talking about the Church as sign of the kingdom it is usually said that the Church is **called** to be such a sign and that she is such, indeed an effective one, to the extent that she responds to this calling. Nevertheless, it is possible, and it often seems to be the case, to catch the Church not being what she is called to be. The reason for this is that the understanding of the Church as such tends to be empirical and pragmatic (modern stance), rather than confessional and spiritual (traditional stance).

The thought which is being advanced here runs like this. If the "kingdom of God" implies a divine claim for a universal rule which unifies all humanity, and if the Church as we empirically see it in the contemporary context is divided, then, obviously the kingdom has not yet come - at least in its fulness - and the Church - or rather the divided Church - is simply called to be a sign of the kingdom.

The fact that the contemporary "divided Church" does not seem to be content any more with perpetuating past divisions and that in her there exists at the present time a whole network of bilateral and multilateral dialogues and acts of cooperation which are specifically aimed at overcoming divisions - the World Council being a most conspicuous, if not the most conspicuous, case in point - is a strong indication that the kingdom is at work in the Church and that the Church is at least a provisional sign of the kingdom, which is at work at this present time and is pressing on towards its full manifestation in the future. Thus a reciprocity is reached between the Church and the kingdom of God, inasmuch as the one seems to anticipate and even manifest the other. In the last analysis, however, the kingdom of God is a much wider notion than that of the Church, and could, or rather should - so it is claimed - be seen as the criterion of the Church.

I hope that in broad outline I have got the picture right, even though there are still many important details to be added to it. However, before I go on to say anything further on Church and God's kingdom, I feel that I must first give an answer to the question which is probably lurking in your mind, namely, "what has the Church/Kingdom theme to do with the Creation/Kingdom theme which is the principal theme of this conference?" "Much in several ways" I hasten to answer - and here I am continuing my reflection on what is being advanced in the contemporary ecumenical dialogue in this area - because it is the Church that actually sees and speaks of the world as God's creation and it is the Church that, as a sign of the coming kingdom which unifies humanity under God's rule of love and truth, has indeed an important role to play in the maintenance or recovery - in many particular instances and as a whole - of the integrity of the creation which constitutes the natural environment, the home, we might say, of humanity.

To talk about creation, in this case, is to talk not only about God's initial act of bringing the world into existence out of nothing - a metaphysical, or meta-historical event which stands apart from, or in remote and isolated dignity, in relation to the world as we see and experience it. Rather to talk about creation here is to talk about a continuous act, a process, which has a beginning, a past, a present and ... a future goal to which it tends. The uninterrupted movement of creation towards this future goal is directly connected with the kingdom of God, inasmuch as the creation, though endowed with spontaneity and freedom, is ultimately subject to the rule of God, his providence, his care, his wisdom, his freedom and his will. In other words the theistic outlook of the creation is fundamental.

Yet, because through humanity and other spiritual agencies, which are endowed with freedom and self-determination, there is present in the creation deviation and disorientation, situations of imbalance, injustice and strife, a fall, or falling away, from God's good design, there is a problem as far as the integrity of creation is concerned, a problem which is immediately experienced by human beings, especially in the contemporary social political situation in which we live. Thus the kingdom of God, his rule, care, design etc., for the creation, is either pushed into the future and becomes a distant hope, or is regarded as imminent to the extent that its effective signs - one of the most important of which is the Church - are in operation, or it (the kingdom of God) becomes the agent of judgment and just suffering, the aim of which is to restore justice and peace to creation by coordinating free creaturely action with the creative action of divine freedom, namely, to restore the creation to its integrity. In view of all this, it becomes clear that the more effective sign of the kingdom of God the Church becomes, the greater the manifestation of the kingdom of God in creation becomes. Both, then, the fulfilment of the Church's calling and the restoration of the creation to its integrity are essentially connected with the kingdom of God, which seems to be the wider notion which binds together the notions of the creation and the Church.

The propriety of the above described way of thinking for contemporary ecumenical theology seems to rest and even to be defended on two grounds at least: firstly on the ground that the creation and the Church are both seen from an empirical pragmatic point of view, as opposed to an ideological one - something which grows apace with the prevailing down to earth realism of modern culture - and secondly on the ground that the wider normative and regulative principle of the kingdom of God is theocentric in a comprehensive, as opposed to a partial, manner - something, that is, which allows and even calls for an open and fruitful dialogue between both the "divided Church" with the other religions, and the social/cultural and economic/political groupings (often described as "first", "second", "third", and even a "fourth" world, or white and colour societies, or male and female communities, etc.) with each other.

I hope that this presentation of mine of recent thinking on our present topic in the context of WCC ecumenical theological dialogue is not very far from the facts, otherwise my Orthodox reaction or appraisal of it might turn out to be unfair. I trust, however, that it will not be irrelevant, even if I am more or less mistaken in my presentation, because it will stand for something which holds true for Orthodox who occupy an important place in the dialogue.

How does an Orthodox stand in relation to this way of thinking? This is the question that I shall now attempt to respond to and I shall do it generally and briefly as I did in my presentation of this thinking. To begin with, an Orthodox would like to test the basic notions which lie at the heart of this thinking - in this case the notions of "the kingdom of God", the "Church" and the "Creation" - in the light of the normative standard of Orthodox Christian thinking which is, succinctly defined, "what Christ gave, the Apostles preached and the Fathers kept".

What did Christ give concerning the kingdom of God? He linked the kingdom decisively with himself, inasmuch as he became not only the one who simply announced it but also the one who as God procured it, as man realized it and as God-man handed it on to his holy Apostles and through them to the entire body of the Church. The rich materials which the holy Gospels provide on this theme of the kingdom make it plain that the kingdom of God, seen as the free realization of God's rule and design in the specific context of human society and in the creation at large, is primarily and essentially connected with the Lord Jesus Christ himself, his divine-human person and work - the latter being achieved through unjust but free suffering on the Cross, with all that this involves, and the just and vindicatory Resurrection and Ascension (Exaltation). In the very heart of all this there is the fact that God's kingdom is not of this world, but comes into it from outside, from God the Creator/Redeemer, takes up the world through the Incarnation and sets up the operation of its restoration, renewal and glorification. As such it cannot be measured by anything in this world which stands apart from it; rather it is the measure of all human and cosmic existence. It is the free gift of God's grace, glory, energy, life and love, which is freely given and taken in Christ. In him all is and becomes "ye" and "amen". He is the firstfruits, first in all respects, the only foundation upon which everything else is being built. Christology then, both in its ontological and dynamic/soteriological aspects, is the essence and key to the kingdom of God.

The Christocentric standard for the kingdom of God is in no way monistic. This is seen not only in the Gospel where Christ's presence and work is said to be for us (human beings) and for the entire world (the creation), but especially in the circle which is concretely formed around Christ, the body of the faithful around the Body of the Lord, his holy Mother, with the holy Apostles and the communion of the Saints, the Church. The kingdom of Christ is extended and realized in them too. What happened to him, now happens to them. There is the same glorification

through unjust suffering, martyrdom, resurrection and ascension (exaltation). In Christ's body, the Church, the kingdom is firmly established and there is nothing that can shake it, just as there is nothing that can measure it. The Church then, seen in this dimension of holiness (the realm where Christ's self-sanctification is communicated to and embodied by others) which is revealed and celebrated in the midst of history in a concrete form by being connected with concrete communities of human beings, the holy local Churches of God, is the embodiment of the kingdom of God and of Christ which constitutes the ultimate criterion of all our true existence and experience. The Church of Christ, seen concretely in the historic communion of the Saints is the place of the kingdom which is established as a mystery that reveals the end of the creation. The local Church is the place where the heavenly kingdom is manifested, as the criterion of authentic existence and life, whether human or cosmic. Thus the celebrations of the holy mysteries of the Church (Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, etc.) always begin with the recognition, announcement, presentation of the kingdom of God. "Blessed is the kingdom of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and in the ages of the ages" - an acclamation which is always made in the name of Christ, the Incarnate, Crucified, Risen and Ascended One, King and Head of the Church and all creation, since it is always accompanied by an act on behalf of the celebrant which entails the lifting up of the book of the Holy Gospel (the Icon of Christ) and making the sign of the Cross with it. The content of the celebration of the holy mysteries, which follows this Trinitarian acclamation of the kingdom of God over an action which recaptures the economy of Christ, is a detailed elaboration of the mystery which is already presented in the profound introduction/opening of these celebrations. By these celebrations what Christ gave (the kingdom of God, the blessed Trinity) in and through himself (i.e. in and through his Divine-human person and act) and the Apostles preached, has been kept by the Fathers. It is a gift which is freely given and freely received, which is complete, to which nothing needs or can be added, and which can, should and will fill all things. It can be seen by those who have eyes to see and heard by those who have ears to hear. It can be received and maintained by faith and love. This is the gift of God's kingdom, which is tied to the revelation of the Triune God and the reconciliation offered in Christ. The Church cannot be understood apart from it. Rather the Church is constituted by it, even defined by it. It is precisely for this reason that the Church as the place where the kingdom of God is manifested is wider than the world. It is the new creation which has overcome and replaced the old.

It is clear that in this light an Orthodox could not separate the three notions of kingdom of God, Church and creation, for in his experience the kingdom comes in its fulness, the Church is undivided and creation is already renewed. This is not our ideological illusion, but a mystery, a holy mystery, a mode of existence which is imbued with eternal life. This is the experience of the Saints and those who pursue the way of sanctity which arises from the presence of the Holy One of the Saints in their midst. Divided Christians, the old creation, cannot measure this mystery. The history of the present world is so transient and finite that it cannot measure the eternal reality of the kingdom of God, the Church and the New creation into which one enters through repentance. The Gospel message is as true today as it was yesterday and as it will be till the end of the present age. "Repent for the kingdom of God has come."

REPORT OF GROUP I

I. THE GENERAL QUESTION WE ADDRESSED WAS WHAT CAN THE "CONFESSING ONE FAITH" DOCUMENT CONTRIBUTE TO AND RECEIVE FROM JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION (JPIC) IN THE LIGHT OF THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS?

1. General points about text of "Confessing One Faith" (COF)

(a) The statement of method is clear, but does not seem to emerge consistently from the text.

(b) What is its purpose? Is it a convergence document like "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (BEM)? Catechetical? Explicatory? There seems to be some confusion here. Can one form of catechesis or explication be appropriate in all contexts?

(c) The document virtually ignores the context in which the creed was formulated, the questions and crises to which it was an answer. The document proceeds from apparently timeless credal statements; places these in a biblical frame; and then attempts to explicate in relation to today's problems. This project is immensely ambitious, far more so than BEM. There is a need to give attention to situations which have evoked a credal response of such a comprehensive sort.

(d) To what audience(s) is it addressed? Some parts seem to be theological in-group talk. Or is it creating common categories of understanding? We felt that it tries to address too many audiences and ends by being heard clearly by none. There is a need for re-drafting to focus on particular audiences.

(e) We spent some time on hermeneutical problems. There is considerable unevenness in the ways the biblical witness is deployed, and the Montreal consensus seems all but forgotten.

2. Creation and Kingdom in the text

(a) Other parts of the text needed to be considered and revised to take account of creation - e.g. the end of the second article (whose kingdom shall have no end) and the ecclesiological sections of the third article.

(b) We felt it necessary to read the creation narratives in the light of the basic exodus experience, the old exodus of Israel and the new exodus of the cross: God the liberator is the creator; the creation is liberation.

(c) The creator is the Triune God, the God who is love. We need to speak of creatio ex amore: God creates in order to love; God's love enables love (we love because he first loved us). We should love the rest of creation. Love should condition our use, enjoyment and investigation of the non-human creation.

(d) What is the relationship between love and justice? They are characteristics of the kingdom, descriptions of the relationships proper to the kingdom which encompass the whole creation. This area urgently requires careful exploration in the text.

II. REMARKS AND COMMENTS TO THE STUDY DOCUMENT "CONFESSING ONE FAITH" (NUMBERS REFER TO PARAGRAPHS IN THE DOCUMENT) SEE APPENDIX I)

C. (p. 28) It was thought important to establish the contemporary challenges and alternatives to Christian understanding of creation in this section.

62. A number of words and phrases were thought problematic: "ex nihilo", "being", "cause".

63. Reference needs to be made to the rise of secular history, of science and of the instrumentalist view of nature often sponsored by modern technology.

64. The paragraph needs redrafting as a systematic presentation of major areas of discussion, for example spatio-temporality, ecology, physics, biology, economics, politics, sociality, personality, communication, language - in themselves and in the ongoing dynamics of history. It should not be supposed that in themselves consideration of these areas produces exploitation, only that such considerations, particularly where linked with instrumentalist technology, may produce exploitation. "Governed", "design" and "stewards" were considered problematic words (see below).

I. (p. 29) It was thought that more explicit attention should be given to the Trinitarian basis of Christian understanding, and also to the importance of history and the kingdom of God in this section.

67. For "mystery of evil", read "inexplicability of evil".

68. For "The Fathers argue...", read "the early tradition argued..."

69. Consideration of the Lordship of God includes several elements, the sufficiency of God, that God is over all else, and the recognition or revelation of these.

71. 'create all that is in its interrelatedness as intrinsically good, but through that same word God directs the course of history to the kingdom of righteousness. As the world resists, God restores...'

72. the notion of creation enriched by reference to the person and work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit as seen in connection with such issues as were mentioned in para. 64. This would permit wider reference to the gospels in para. 73.

73. The use of the word 'design' suggests a metaphysical notion of the sort discarded by modern science. It would therefore be better to refer to the implicit order of creation which is illuminated by the behaviour and teaching of Jesus Christ, including his recognition of the natural world as an icon of proper relation to God's purposes.

The human capacity for destruction is virtually unlimited, but it is ultimately limited by God's preservation of the natural world. Mankind cannot finally bring the world to collapse, and God's sustaining and saving activity limits and counteracts the forces of evil in the world from within. Such limits, evident in the world itself, are the basis for the Christian hope that the sovereignty of God will prevail...

74. Belief in the creative power of God is rooted also in the human understanding of history, from its origin in the conferral of time upon creation by God to its culmination in the kingdom. Throughout this history, there is a vast network of inter-relations, providing the possibility of the maturing of creation in a family-like pattern until the kingdom of God comes.

75. ...'the creator through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.'

76. 'As the gift of God the world is intrinsically good. Its God-given goodness is implicit in all the world, whether seen or unseen, and holds together what is seen and what is unseen, whether in the cosmos or in human beings. The divisions often drawn between them are the product of habitual patterns of human understanding, and the tensions often found between them will be overcome...'

77. 'Today, the inter-relatedness of the world in history, with all the opportunities it offers for the distortion of the balance of the created order, brings a heightened awareness of the question of creation and of the existence of God the creator. For some this is a matter of anxiety, but for the Christian it brings a greater conviction of the goodness of creation as a sharing in the grace of God. This awareness of participation in the gracious goodness of God affects every moment of human life...'

78. (new title) The Relation of Creation to the Triune God.

78. (Paragraph needs tightening to avoid repetition, and cross reference to 'Church and Society', recognizing the sharp contrast of the view presented here to the panentheis and process theology of that Report.)

after 'likewise that...' (insert) 'the work of the Holy Spirit is God's love within creation giving it life, inspiring ...destiny.' Then continue: 'As in the beginning, so in the Incarnation, it is the Spirit who is active...' 'They likewise praise God the Father...'

(transpose para. 80 to follow para. 78, then continue with para. 81, then with para. 79)

80. 'All of this means that the nature and activity of creation itself comes from the presence and activity of the triune God within it...'

Paragraph needs reference to panentheis, and all three terms (deism, pantheism and panentheism) require commentary.

81. (after first sentence, continue:) 'The goodness of creation includes the necessity of competition between species in the subhuman realm and also the capacity of human beings to transcend this to live responsibly in peace. Likewise, it includes the necessity of natural death for finite beings, and also the attempt by human beings to use every means to avoid death. Nonetheless, evil is a reality active within God's creation, and Christian faith also recognizes that the goodness of creation is constantly threatened by suffering, finding in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the surprise of new life even in suffering and death. Though it is not easy for them, or indeed anyone, to live with the difficulties which appear in life, they look forward to the final... (omitting 'look forward to') ...Thus for them the whole history of creation is marked by hope.'

79. '...The Christian faith in the triune God affirms the entrance of God himself into the materiality and suffering of creation, and therefore the presence of God's glory in the whole creation. In the liturgy, in fellowship with those who suffer, it celebrates the transfiguration and renewal of creation by God himself, looking forward to the culmination of this renewal in the kingdom of righteousness.

82. (Both paragraphs 82 and 83 need a more substantial consideration of divine action in the world and history.)

'...God's action, when seen in trinitarian terms, is qualitatively different in the various means by which it preserves and sustains creation at every moment.'

83. 'In particular, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in creation provides the spontaneity of its life, and enables human beings to transcend even this spontaneity in their freedom and creativity. It is thus that human beings actively respond to the will and purposes of God. But both the consistency of their freedom and a defence of the created order against the destructive powers of evil is maintained by Christ. Thus the whole fabric and freedom of creation reflects and witnesses to the glory of the triune God who creates and sustains it in anticipation of the coming kingdom.

84. 'In the Christian perspective, humans together are created with and in nature in the image and likeness of their creator. They have the dignity which is proper to all natural beings. But in a more specific sense they find their dignity in lifting their life and being, and those of all nature, in praise to God. In doing so, they accept responsibility for that which is natural, for lifting it to God and fulfilling it according to God's will and purposes. In humility they are to care for all that is created, whether each other, the animal kingdom, the plants or all the resources of the earth.'

'One aspect of this responsibility is that they should seek to understand nature, its conditions and what is good for it: and this leads to the development of the sciences and technology. But frequently they meet limits which they do not recognize; even when they think they know what nature is and what is good for it, they do not know. And this leads to damaging and misguided attempts to use it, and later to heal it - a vicious circle replacing the God-given relatedness of humankind and nature.'

86. '...sin leads to exploitation and violence by which the natural inter-relatedness of creation is destroyed...'

'humanity refuses to be accountable to God and...'

89. 'Creation itself is dynamic because the Spirit of God works through it. To delight in creation, to join in creation's praise of God, is not merely legitimate: it is right. But this delight involves responsibility; it provides human beings with a task. To resist this task is to join the destructive powers of evil at work in creation. But even where these powers are at work, Christians are assured in hope that the destiny of creation will remain in God's hands...'

III. A SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION OF "THE CREATOR AND HIS CREATION"

The group was asked to consider and comment upon Part I, Section C, of the study document "Confessing One Faith". There was a substantial and valuable discussion of the text which considered its doctrinal content, its effectiveness as a statement for its likely audiences and its relation to the documents of other World Council consultations. Particular attention was given to the relation of "Confessing One Faith" to the ongoing JPIC discussions.

It was thought that Part I, Section C, required revision and amplification at many points, in order both to establish its relevance and to correct some of the implications of the text. It would also be necessary to refer to this section elsewhere in "Confessing One Faith", and to revise other sections in the light of revisions necessary in this section.

A. Addressing Particular Audiences

The text needs to speak effectively to a variety of audiences concerned, often in very specialist ways, with issues directly related to creation. The language and conceptualities employed in "Confessing One Faith" are not sufficiently close to such issues as they appear in current discussions. Hence it is important to recognize the range of discussions (e.g. in the natural and human sciences, technology and culture) which impinge on the doctrine of creation and to address them in language recognizable in those discussions.

B. Credal Statements and Biblical Hermeneutics

The text summarizes and restates statements of belief as if they were "timeless" and had not occurred within a particular historical context, and then - apparently in order to authenticate these statements - juxtaposes them with abbreviated (and inadequate) summaries of the emergence of such beliefs in biblical history. This is an unsatisfactory response to the question of the connection between biblical history, interpretation and doctrinal statements. The consideration of statements of belief needs to include attention to their connection with issues of biblical interpretation and recognition of the context of the origins of such statements.

C. Using Appropriate Notions

Some of the notions used in the text, which appear there as neutral or normative, require reconsideration in the light of current understanding. Notions such as being, cause, ex nihilo, design, power, steward, direction, as well as unduly anthropocentric and male-centred language, should be used only with caution and with their difficulties noted.

D. Doctrinal Issues

The text considers the significance of creation as a whole, and does so in a very generalized way. It tends therefore to overlook some of the most basic assertions which need to be made: the particularity of creation as we know it, the inter-relatedness of all that is (as in ecology), its intrinsic goodness as such, and the importance of embodiment. These are not to be equated with "the world as God's good gift to humanity" (para. 76) or over simple discussions of the seen and the unseen (para. 76). Recognizing these features is necessary in order to maintain the accomplishment of the work of God in creation, whereby the world is accorded its own proper nature and freedom.

At the same time, the capacity which natural and human beings show for destruction must be clearly emphasized; by referring to "destructive forces" and "forces of evil" (para. 73), the text loses sight of the location of evil in the activity of created beings. It is striking how undeveloped the statements about sin are (paras. 86-87).

Since so much attention is given to the basic features of the relation of the world to God (cf. para. 74), there is also a substantial question as to whether enough attention is given to the historical character of creation, both in itself and as it moves to the kingdom of God. Much that is said suggests a very simplistic relation of God to history (that he "governs and perfects it", para. 83), without recognizing God's operation through the contingency of world history.

More substantial consideration also needs to be given to the nature of God and his activity in his creation. In particular, more thorough attention needs to be given to the implications of Trinitarian understanding for the activity of God in creation. And with this, more explanation of alternative views (deism, pantheism, etc.) needs to be provided for those unfamiliar with them. In particular, panentheism has to be treated carefully. Despite the extent to which it is used by some, as in the Church and Society documents for example, panentheism should not be accepted uncritically. There are different senses in which it is used; they vary from a very generalized view to the more well-defined position advanced by process philosophers. While there may be no difficulty accepting the former, the latter is a "meditation philosophy" which may displace more specifically Christian understanding of God's activity in creation.

In what is said in the text about the nature and activity of God, the language of governance, power, domination and dependence, on the one hand, and ideas of transformation on the other, abound. But the language of love and graciousness - as providing freedom (and the possibility of spontaneity of life) for creation, on the one hand, and ideas of enrichment on the other, are more primary. On the one hand, such understanding would lead to a view of the activity of the Triune God as creatio ex amore. On the other hand, it would provide a much more positive notion of human responsibility than that which appears in the text (para. 84), which invokes ideas of governance. It also allows for more specific recognition of the limitations of human beings and their need for humility, when they do not know what is good for nature and therefore damage the natural world even as they attempt to heal it from the damage they themselves have inflicted upon it.

REPORT OF GROUP II

The Group reflected on the document "Towards a Theology of Nature and a Theocentric Ethic" in the Report of the Glion Meeting, pp. 37-43.

I. THE PRESENT CONTEXT OF THE DISCUSSION

No comments were made on this section.

II. ELEMENTS IN A THEOLOGY OF NATURE

In our consideration of a theology of nature, we affirm the sub-unit of Church and Society's emphasis on God's immanence in creation. While recognising the importance of its contribution, the group pointed to the inadequacy of using process theology as the only basis for phrasing this emphasis and for providing the framework for this document. Other theological contributions need to be taken into account. Thus other perspectives are offered for consideration in relation to sub-section B and C of this section.

A. The present situation

This sub-section was affirmed in our discussions, and no substantive points were made to supplement it.

B. Our traditional understanding of God - Humanity - Nature

The Group offers the following elements which seem to challenge the statement that "By and large, the relations of God to nature and humanity have been depicted in static images and terms ..." (Glion Report, sub-section B, 2nd para., p. 38)

(a) The divine economy

This is highlighted in emphases such as:

- a Trinitarian vision which sees creation as part of a divine economy which in principle includes every conceivable aspect of and development of nature;

- soteriological statements about "nature", starting from Romans 8, but which by implication also extends to themes such as "resurrection" and "transfiguration";

- a "protological" interpretation of Jesus' preaching of the "kingdom" or "reign" of God.

(b) The dynamic inter-connectedness

(i) in blessing

This is expressed in the comomon root of key terms. God is spoken of as the Word of God (dabar) whose Word continuously initiates the acts of creating (bara) and establishing a people (barith) for which the community gives thanks and praise (berakah). This blessing is a blessing by the community for all God's gifts of ordinary life through which God is evident in his works, just as in his work of liberation in the creating of the Covenant.

This inter-connection is emphasised by the statement of the Eucharist in BEM.

(ii) and in well-being

This is emphasised in the understanding of the household of God, where the inter-relation of human beings is related also to God's care for the whole inhabited earth. A focus on the creative, life-giving role of women in this inter-dependence is a further dynamic element in the understanding of the relation of God to nature and humanity.

(c) God in the ordinary

The manifestation of God in and through the ordinary events of life is emphasised in Wisdom literature. This emphasises the Word of God in cultural and liturgical expressions and in sights through which the creativity of God is to be discerned and received, and through which the interdependence of humanity and nature is stressed.

(d) Eschatology

The eschatological vision of the present day suffering, the chaos and groaning in the created order through which the liberation of Jesus issues as He makes all things new (Rom. 8:18-27) - a vision of wholeness. This dynamic vision of the relation between God and the created order is sustained in the struggle for freedom and liberation by the Holy Spirit.

(e) The position of Creator and creations' needs

The need to move beyond our anthropocentric understanding to affirm more God's creation. In listening carefully to God's world and to those scientists and processes which point to the wholeness and inter-relatedness of all life, it is important to be receptive to those tendencies within science which emphasise an ecological and holistic understanding of nature.

In this receptivity we affirm the understanding of the ministry of the whole people of God as "poets", thus bringing together in creativity and imagination the vision of wholeness.

(f) The context of these elements

Is that of an inter-faith dialogue which reaffirms the relationship of transcendence and immanence, and which points to the interdependence of the whole of humankind, and through which an awareness of the wholeness of nature, creation and humankind is affirmed.

C and D - sub-sections on pp. 38-41.

No additional points were made in relation to these sub-sections.

III. TOWARDS A THEOCENTRIC ETHIC

The Group stressed that an ethical response needs to emphasise the wholeness, inter-relatedness, and value of creation and nature, and the importance of undertaking these discussions in, and to take seriously, the content of interfaith dialogue; while any discussion of ethics is highly contextual, but must relate to the wholeness of human life, creation and nature.

IV and V

No discussion of these sections took place.

APPENDIX I

(Extract from "Confessing One Faith", Faith and Order Paper No. 140, WCC, Geneva 1987 - pages 28-36)

C. THE CREATOR AND HIS CREATION

62. Christians believe that the world in which they live is not an autonomous entity, which has its origins, life and destiny in itself. Rather, they believe that the world is the work of God, the Creator, who called it "ex nihilo" into being by his Word. God is not only the cause of its being but also the continuing source of its life and final goal of its existence.

63. This Christian affirmation is challenged because many today consider that the world is autonomous and self-sustaining, neither in need of a transcendent origin nor of a sustaining power. This world-view is connected with, though not a necessary consequence of, the rise of modern scientific technology. Another challenge comes to the Christian view of creation from the social reality of secularized society. Religion seems unnecessary and superfluous as an account of the establishment and sustaining of the social order.

64. A further challenge to the Christian view of creation comes from those who, while believing that creation originated with God, hold that it is now out of God's hands. Modern economic structures involve limitless exploitation of natural resources and endanger the ecological balance of life; nuclear weapons present a threat to the survival of humankind and perhaps the planetary systems, while genetic manipulation gives control over God's creatures. In such ways, modern scientific culture challenges the Christian belief that creation originated in God, that it is continually sustained by him and governed according to the purposes of his design and the place of men and women in God's creation as responsible stewards of his creation.

65. Finally there is the challenge to consider theologically the relation between the affirmation of the goodness of creation and the reality of evil, principalities and powers within it.

I. THE CREED AND ITS BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

(a) The text of the Creed

66. "We believe in one God...,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen."

(AC: "I believe in God...,
creator of heaven and earth.")

67. The Church inherited from the Old Testament the faith that God is "the Maker of heaven and earth, the visible and invisible world" (Gen. 1:1ff.; Col. 1:15f.), and like ancient Israel it had to face questions about the goodness of God's creation and of the mystery of evil in the world. In the first centuries after Christ the interpretation of creation became again controversial when heretical teachings drove a sharp wedge between the visible and invisible world, between matter and spirit, the God of the Old Testament and of creation on the one hand and the God and Father of Jesus Christ on the other, between Israel and the Church, between the Old Testament writings and the New Testament scriptures.

68. At the time when the Creed was formulated in the fourth century, it was necessary to reaffirm the faith that God the Father is also the Creator, in order to exclude heresies which denied the identity of the creator and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (e.g. Marcionism and Gnosticism). The Christian tradition argued that everything comes from God against the view that the world was formed from pre-existent matter - a belief expressed in Gnostic and Manichean theories. The Fathers argue that not only the form of matter but the very existence of all comes from God. This excluded the idea of the co-eternity of the cosmos and even the assumption of uncreated matter.

(b) Biblical foundation

69. Although the LORD was understood as creator from an early period it was relatively late that Israel came to proclaim the God of Israel sovereign over all other powers. It came in the time of the Exile after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, after the apparent humiliation and defeat of the LORD by the Babylonian god Marduk, in the days when Israel's trust in him might seem to have lost all basis. It was then that Second Isaiah announced that the LORD was indeed the creator of the whole world, ruling over it and its history. The Old Testament affirms that the whole world has come into being through God and is completely dependent upon him as its maker (Gen. 1:1-2:25; Ps. 8; Isa. 40:25-26); it shows forth God's wisdom and power (Ps. 104:24; Prov. 3:19-20); it bears witness to God's steadfast love and care (Ps. 136:4-9). Hence, the majesty of God, reflected in his works of creation, is the basis for worshipping and thanksgiving, for trusting and obeying God (Ps. 95; Isa.40:27-31). Moreover it is the LORD's continuing power that upholds and renews the creation (Ps. 104:29-30).

70. Israel's belief in creation further found its expression in Genesis 1 and 2. These chapters owe much to the religious traditions of the Ancient Near East, especially to the Babylonians and the Canaanites.

Although traces of belief in creation out of some existing matter can be detected behind the story, the Genesis account of creation has been drastically transformed and remoulded to express Israel's own belief that the LORD created by his mere word of command. The Genesis account of creation led to a belief in creation ex nihilo which finds clear expression in 2 Maccabees (7, 28).

71. Not only did the LORD create the world by his word but through that same word God directs the course of history. God's continuing care for the world, his acts of salvation in this history of his people are interpreted as acts of re-creation which will culminate in the eschatological act of salvation and re-creation at the end of time.

72. In the New Testament the soteriological and eschatological significance of creation comes to the fore in the context of the work of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit: God who created in the beginning, creates anew and will create in the future (Mk. 13, 19; Eph. 2 10; Rev. 1:8). In the end God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28) and there will be "a new heaven and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1; cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). All creatures and nature itself will also be transformed and will participate in God's new world (Rom. 8:19-23).

73. In the New Testament the design of creation is seen in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 8:6; Jn. 1:1-18). God creates, sustains, redeems and perfects his creation through Christ who is the centre of all that is (Col. 1:15-17; Eph. 1:9-10; Heb. 1:2-3). This divine economy, however, is not to be seen as continuous progress towards perfection but, rather, has to deal with the destructive forces, which result from sinful self-centredness and self-concern, the cause of evil and suffering in God's creation. According to the New Testament the destructive forces finally lead to death in the individual and to the ultimate collapse of the created world. It is only God's sustaining and saving activity that counteracts and limits and will finally overcome the forces of evil at work in the world. The church, living under Christ as its head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-24) and having its members continuously transformed into the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49), has a new vision of the ultimate purpose of the Creator and Redeemer, firmly believing in the future resurrection of the body and in the life of the world to come.

74. The belief in the creative power of God's word (Gen. 1; Jn. 1-1-3; Heb. 11:3) and the confidence that God is able to create "out of nothing" (Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:3; cf. Matt. 3:9) are characteristic of the Christian faith in God the Creator. The same applies to the conviction that everything has a beginning, that creation is the starting point of history, that all human existence has a historical character and that creation serves a divine purpose.

II. EXPLICATION FOR TODAY

Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen

75. The first article affirms that the one God, the Father, the Almighty, is also "the maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible". In the second article it is further clarified that the Son of the Father is the one "through whom all things came into existence". Finally the third article affirms that the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, is "the giver of life", and concludes with an eschatological reference to "the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come". In this way it is affirmed that the One God, the Father Almighty, is the Creator through the Son and through the Holy Spirit.

76. Faith in God the Creator implies that the world is the good work of the Father and not an evil world hostile to him. As such the world is God's good gift to humanity to live in it and care for it. In addition the Creed stresses that God is the Creator of both "heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible". This means that the created universe is not made up only of those material, tangible realities of the world which very often seem predominantly to occupy our attention.

The dividing line between what is seen and unseen appears to be shifting in the process of human experience and scientific descriptions of the world of creation. But there will always be a difference between what we can grasp and what is beyond our grasp. Invisible, spiritual subconscious and suprasensible dimensions which belong to the wholeness of God's creation are also, just as the material world, a locus for both good and evil. Notwithstanding the difference between the visible and the invisible aspect of creation there is no dualism or separation between "material" and "spiritual" in the Christian understanding of the world. The tension between the two belongs to our present condition of time but will be overcome in the realisation of the eschatological vision (cf. 1 Cor. 13, 12).

77. More than in some periods of church history the Christian affirmation of God as creator has assumed a deep existential and experiential meaning for many people. The contingency of individual existence as well as the existence of the world, the precariousness and fragility of all life remind the Christian of the complete dependence of finite reality on the power of God transcending every finite reality and order. This dependence affects every moment of human life and the continuing existence of the natural and social world and its order. It comprises both the origin of their existence and their preservation at any given time. The notion of "creatio ex nihilo" accordingly

relates to both these aspects. Theological explications of the affirmation of God as creator are, therefore, of vital significance for the Christian faith, witness and life in the world today.

The Triune God and his creation

78. The trinitarian understanding of God is indispensable for a Christian understanding of God's relation to the world as creation. The One God is both transcendent to and present in his creation. Moreover each divine Person, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, of the one God participates in both this transcendence and this immanence. When Christians speak then of one or the other of God's works concerning creation as particularly appropriate to one or the other of the divine persons, they always insist that all three persons fully participate in that work. Thus when they say that God the Father, the source of the triune being, is the God above creation who "in the beginning" created out of nothing all that is, they remember that this work is accomplished through the Word, God's Son, and through the Holy Spirit, the Creator Spiritus. Likewise, when they speak of the incarnation of the Second Person, of the divine Word become flesh (cf. Jn. 1:14), in so doing they also affirm that God the Father and creator is thereby expressing his faithfulness to and in his creation, and likewise that - as in the beginning, so in the incarnation - it is the Spirit who is active, leading to completion the work of the Father and the Son, and leading creation to its culmination in Christ, the first-born of all creation (Col. 1:15). Again, when they affirm the work of the Holy Spirit within creation, giving life, inspiring and empowering the creation towards the fulfilment of its destiny, they likewise praise God the Father whose mysterious purpose embraces all things (cf. Eph. 1:9) and God the Son in whom all things hold together visible and invisible. Thus, in all aspects of his relation to creation - in his transcendence, his presence within the world, his sustaining and perfecting activity - it is one and the same triune God in the loving communion of the three persons who is always at work.

God's glory in creation

79. Being made by the hands of the creator, the creation is firm in its foundation, very good and magnificent. It is not only made for use by humankind. God the creator, and humankind in communion with God, rejoice together in the creation (Gen. 1:31). Israel sees in the creation the characteristic features of God's glory on earth and in heaven (Ps. 8:2; Is. 6:1-3). It is this glory which accompanied the people of Israel during the course of its history, beginning with the Exodus. The Christian faith in the triune God affirms the presence of God's glory in the whole creation and rejoices in it with thanksgiving particularly in the celebration of the liturgy.

80. All of this means that creation is sanctified through the presence and activity of the triune God in it. Therefore in Christian trinitarian perception, creation is not to be seen in any sense as standing apart from God, as the deistic view asserts, nor as being confused with God, as the pantheistic view claims. Rather, creation, though other than God, and still "in bondage to decay and groaning in travail" (Rom. 8:21-22), can be properly understood only in relation to him as its creator, redeemer and sustainer.

Evil in creation

81. The Christian faith acknowledges the essential goodness of creation and that all created life is a sacred gift of God. Since evil, however, is a reality active within God's good creation, the Christian faith also recognizes that the goodness and wholeness of creation is constantly threatened by death and decay, natural catastrophies and manifold sufferings of created beings. Thus the whole history of creation is marked by a certain ambiguity which seems to be characteristic of this world as it is known in daily experience. Nevertheless, because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, Christians expect the final healing, liberation and restoration of the whole of creation from the destructive powers of darkness and evil and look forward to the day when Christ is to consummate the whole creation in the eternal kingdom of God (cf. Rom. 8:22f.).

God sustains and governs his world

82. In his providence God cares for his creation. He responds to the need of each creature for sustained existence which arises every day anew. God has not created the cosmos once in the beginning and then left it to itself for its own perpetuation. Rather, through his continuous creation God preserves and sustains his creation at every moment.

83. This creation is not only preserved by God, but he is also its supreme Lord, governing everything in creation according to his will and leading it according to his plans towards the final consummation, not letting it go to the consequences of the destructive powers of evil. Thus the visible and invisible creation reflects and witnesses to the glory of the triune God who creates, sustains, governs and perfects it.

The responsibility of humanity in creation

84. In the Christian perspective humankind has been created in the image and likeness of its creator. As such humankind is given a permanent dignity which requires appreciation of life and praise of the creation and the creator. At the same time human beings are given responsibility to be God's representatives. They are to be co-operators in, stewards

of, and even rulers over, creation (Gen. 1:26ff.; Ps. 8:4-8) - to care for all that is created, whether human beings, the animal kingdom, the plants and all the resources of the earth. This implies that human beings are free to develop science and technology and to use them for the purpose of caring and serving all that has been created. Yet their scientific endeavours will always encounter limitations because God has not only created what "is seen" but also what is "unseen". There are realities in God's creation which are beyond the grasp of the human mind. Even though the range of human knowledge can be expanded, still at any new level of human knowledge the reality of what "is unseen" presents itself in new ways.

85. In recent times the charge has been made that the biblical command to be stewards of, and even rulers over creation has contributed to developments which threaten to destroy creation. This charge applies where the commission to rule over the world has been divorced in a process of emancipation from accountability to the creator. It also applies to Christian involvement in this process where the biblical command has been misunderstood in terms of human autonomy leading to abusive domination over creation and a neglect of the proper stewardship owed to the triune God. Understood in its true context and meaning, however, the biblical command liberates human beings to become co-operators with God in his desire and activity to preserve his creation.

The threat of destruction and God's act to save his creation

86. It is the reality of human sin which threatens creation, because sin leads to destruction, perishing and death. Humanity places itself in the position of God and as a consequence creation is abused and human life is destroyed. In disobeying God's commandment, humanity refuses to be God's steward and, instead, abuses God's good creation for selfish purposes in the exploitation of nature, the destruction of the environment and of human beings, and the use of science and technology for destroying life instead of furthering it.

87. But in Jesus Christ sin and death are overcome. In the resurrection of the crucified one, new life and hope, reaching beyond death, are given through the Holy Spirit, in word and sacraments and especially in baptism and eucharist. Through Jesus Christ, as the firstborn of a new creation, God has renewed and continues to renew humanity. Women and men are continuously set free to discover and acknowledge their creator, released from the bonds of enslavement within themselves in order to be truly human, to live in solidarity with all God's creatures.

Ethics of creation

88. This restoration of human beings in Christ established for Christians a new ethic of creation and environment which demands of women and men the surrender of privileges and advantages which they had assumed in order to gain control over nature. The Christian understanding of, and relation to God's creation, calls for a more careful and responsible use of science and technology, resistance to the destruction of human beings and preference for human life and relationships over material things and a life of co-operation with God in preserving, renewing and sanctifying his good creation.

89. Creation itself is alive because of the dynamic power of the Spirit of God working in it. This life is threatened by war and ruthless exploitation. Christians, together with other people, are called to resist these threats with all their efforts. Even where the destructive powers of evil are at work in creation, Christians are assured in hope that the destiny of creation will remain in God's hands. God will bring the creation to its fulfilment in a new heaven and a new earth. Therefore, Christians can even now give honour, praise and glory to God the Father of all good things, who through his Son has come into his creation to redeem it, and who through his Holy Spirit gives new life to it until he will bring it to its final fulfilment.

APPENDIX II

(Extract from the Glion Working Committee Report, pp. 37-44)

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF NATURE AND A THEOCENTRIC ETHIC

I. THE PRESENT CONTEXT OF THE DISCUSSION

In our work as a sub-unit we relate to three contexts, and need to be aware of the themes, assumptions and languages appropriate to each.

A. The World Council of Churches (WCC)

We see our work as part of the JPIC programme, to be done in cooperation with other sub-units. Our particular contribution to the programme is to stress the importance of learning from scientific insights both in theology and ethics. The interaction between theological reflection and use of the best available knowledge about the nature of the world is an esential basis for effective policy-making on matters central to JPIC.

B. The Churches

We are not trying to devise a new theology and ethic, but to point to ways in which existing ones may be developed in order to take account of scientific knowledge. We need to be sensitive to the variety of theological traditions, and to state broad principles in non-technical language, which may then be developed further by different churches in the styles familiar to them. There can be no WCC "theology of nature", but there can be inputs from the WCC to stimulate thinking in the churches on these vital matters.

C. The Global Context

Global problems require global action. The churches must therefore find ways of communication and cooperation with all those who share common concerns about the environment, whatever their faith or lack of it. This must involve a careful use of language and arguments designed, as far as possible, to include those who do not share Christian presuppositions. Widely applicable concepts, such as inter-relatedness, are thus preferable to more theological terms which might be used to describe the same thing.

II. ELEMENTS IN A THEOLOGY OF NATURE

A. The Present Situation

Although the consideration of history has played a large part in the Christian theology of the past few decades, the concept of 'nature' has been relatively neglected, though to varying degrees in different traditions. This comparative

neglect has occurred, in spite of the alterations in the perspectives and prospects of humankind which arise from the new knowledge of the natural sciences and its application to and transformation of our environment.

What does this new scientific knowledge contribute to our understanding of nature? How does this new knowledge affect our understanding of God's relations to nature, including ourselves? Will, and in fact should it, change our perceptions of how we ought to relate to nature?

B. Our traditional understanding of God-Humanity-Nature

Traditionally, Christian theology has always recognised the necessity of holding together, with whatever difficulty and tension, an understanding of God both as transcendent (Creator, Sovereign, Lord, the Mystery behind all, etc.) and as immanent in the created order. As such God is to be perceived in and through that order. It could be argued with some justification that, in the West at least, during the last three centuries there has been a greater emphasis on God's transcendence than on God's immanence. This imbalance might be corrected by sufficient attention to Orthodox theology, which has traditionally stressed that God is revealed through his "energies", through his actions in relation to humanity and the world. But both 'Eastern' and 'Western' Christianity have yet sufficiently to take into account how the scientific perspectives of the world interact with this traditional concept of God's immanence in the world. The time has come to emphasize this fundamental theme in Christian doctrine.

By and large, the relations of God to nature and humanity have been depicted in static images and terms, such as: 'God created'; 'in the beginning'; God was incarnate; God has redeemed us; humanity is a 'damaged' or 'obscured' image of God; is 'fallen'; needs 'redemption' and is destined for 'eternal life'. Thus creation has often been understood as if it were a once-for-all event in the past.

However, the tradition has also included the idea of God continually sustaining the creation. This second concept has tended to be muted, and the question now is how a dynamic view of God's relation to the world can be given new stress.

Even so, God ultimately transcends creation and in love allows it to be itself, and thereby enters into cooperation with creation to bring it to a fuller realization of its potentialities. This is one aspect of the meaning of the affirmation that God is Love. For God's power is the power of love, of a love that persuades - not, as often popularly interpreted, a manipulative, even coercive, power.

The foregoing is an indication of the character of the traditional response to the fact that nature is. That is, a response to the question: why is there anything at all? However, the explosion of scientific knowledge about nature, including humanity, has now led to new insights into what nature is (even allowing for the qualification necessary because science is a continuing and fallible enterprise).

C. What Nature is

Science provides an account of the results of experimental inquiry undertaken to discover the answer to such questions as "What's there?"; "What's going on?"; "How did it get there?".

Elements in scientific perspectives of nature that are widely agreed in the dominant scientific mainstream (which is not without its critics), include:

1. Nature is intelligible, and open to rational, experimental inquiry.

2. Nature is ultimately mysterious. We do not know what matter (e.g., a quark) is 'in itself' - quantum physics remains agnostic on such questions while being able to formulate inter-relations between such fundamental entities in nature.

3. It is worth reminding ourselves that, at the other end of the evolutionary history, as it were, there is a mystery of what a person is in his - or her - self.

4. Nature evolves in time and is not just a static backdrop to human history. Science now offers a new understanding of the processes of development of nature in the time that lies both behind and within human history. Nature does not have a given set of once-for-all characteristics. These evolutionary changes, both at the inorganic and biological levels, proceed by processes intelligible to the sciences.

5. Recently many scientists have come to see these evolutionary processes as the consequence of chance operating in the law-like framework constituted by the constraints of the laws of physics and chemistry, such as the fixed values of fundamental physical constants. This appears to be the basis on which new forms, in particular living ones, appear - though, at later stages in biological evolution, further subtle interactions occur between a creature's behaviour and its evolution. So nature is open-ended and self-organising into new forms - that is, it has an inbuilt creativity.

6. New forms, as new patterns in the stuff of the world, come into existence at the expense of the old - so death is the necessary pre-condition of new life in the biological world. New forms multiply in competition with existing forms, some of which die out in the conflict, while others live in mutual ecological balance. So there is both conflict and cooperation in nature.

7. By the operation of these (and other) intelligible scientific principles, out of the simplicity of atoms and molecules has emerged the remarkable variety of entities in the cosmos, in general, and in biological life, in particular. Nature appears to be far more diverse than would be needed just to ensure the emergence of humanity.

8. There is an inter-relatedness and inter-dependence between the various entities and events that constitute the natural order. This is manifest at the level of the fundamental 'particles' which can be understood only in terms of their inter-relations; and at the level of the inter-connected webs of systems, from the inorganic to the human, that constitute our terrestrial environment.

9. The processes of nature have an inbuilt tendency to produce forms of increased complexity, and this, too, is intelligible in purely scientific terms.

10. One viable route of development has led to the increased sensitivity to and awareness of the environment, through developed nervous systems, and so to pain as a warning signal. This awareness develops into consciousness and, at least in humanity, intelligent self-consciousness with a concomitant increase in the flexibility that enhances survival and reproduction. This increase in self-consciousness is indeed the basis of what seems worthwhile in human life and culture: - inter-personal relations, art, religion, language, science itself. But along with this development of consciousness and self-consciousness, has arisen a greater possibility of suffering.

D. Development of the Christian Understanding of God as Creator in the Light of this Scientific Perspective

1. The fact that so much of the universe is intelligible can strengthen faith in God rather than weaken it. It is not true that God is only to be sought in events which science cannot yet explain. Any such 'God of the gaps' tends to disappear as science develops.

2. The traditional picture of God 'sustaining' the universe can now better be seen in terms of God's continuous creative action. God creates in, with and under the processes science describes. God is still creating.

3. So God is present in and to the world, i.e., God is immanent in it but, as the One who gives it being, also transcends it. So the world can be said to be 'in God' (God is present to all of it, at all times, in all places), and yet the ultimate being of God is 'more than' the world.

4. There is a key problem for our times in how we conceive of God acting in the world for those who accept the scientific picture of the world as a connected web of events intelligible to the sciences. Some Christian thinkers simply wish to affirm that God works in and through the processes the sciences describe and these processes in themselves constitute God's mode of activity in the world. Others do not think this is enough and wish to speak of God's 'love' drawing in the events in a direction to fulfill God's aims.

5. The Christian faith affirms that God is Love, and as Love has joy in creation. The abundance and diversity of creation, especially the variety of living organisms, can be interpreted as reflecting the Creator's joy in creation and abundance of grace. This includes the non-human creation as well as the human ("Not a sparrow falls to the ground...").

6. Nevertheless, the significance of God's creative work is most fully seen in those creatures, in particular ourselves, which are able to make some conscious response to the fresh possibilities God opens up.

7. Since God is present 'in, with and under' all the changing events of the world, the world's sufferings, as well as its creative possibilities, find their reflection in our understanding of God's being. God suffers in and with created beings, both as they persist and in the process of bringing forth the new. The Incarnation and the Cross point beyond themselves and the redemption of humanity to the mystery of suffering within the whole created order.

8. Insofar as human beings are self-conscious, self-transcendent and free, they can respond to God and consciously become co-creators with God - or refuse to do so, as only too manifest in, for instance, the current despoliation of the environment. Our very self-consciousness and freedom make us aware of evil as well as good and of the root of sin within us.

9. In human self-transcendence and freedom, part of the created order has come to reflect God's transcendence and become capable of responding personally to God.

10. Questions about the purpose of creation have usually been answered in terms of the development of this created freedom of humanity and its fulfilment in love. In affirming this, we now in addition also have to see all-that-is as created and being created by God. That is, we must as human co-creators with God attempt to have a theo-centric perspective of nature and this should be made the basis of any Christian environmental ethic. In the providence of God, the created order is an inter-connected web of systems at many levels from the inorganic to the human, and any ethic must recognise this.

III. TOWARDS A THEOCENTRIC ETHIC

A theocentric perspective toward nature holds together both poles of our understanding - the specifically human and the broader context of the whole natural world in which human life is set. A theocentric ethic tries to give value to both, avoiding on the one hand the mistake of seeing all value as human value, and on the other hand the the mistake of failing to accept our human responsibility for much of the world's evil and our call to new life in Christ. God holds all aspects of creation together in interdependence and creative tension. God's presence in all creation reveals to us that in addition to human beings other creatures are also subjects that have a claim upon us. Non-human creatures are not merely objects to be used for our pleasure or instruments for human purposes.

We are in fact part of a community of life which forms a single interrelated whole, and in which subjects other than ourselves have their own intrinsic value. How far within the web of life this intrinsic value extends, and how different values are related to one another, are matters of much debate. A sound environmental ethic, however, needs some vision of this kind to sustain it if it is not to become transformed into yet another means of asserting the overriding importance of human interests.

Unless there is respect for the freedom of all creatures to be themselves, there is unlikely to be respect for the freedom of all people to be themselves. Within the community of life freedom is indivisible. Here our consideration of the moral aspect of "the integrity of creation" is clearly tied to the ideas of "justice" and "peace". Liberation is to function at all levels of the created order. All three terms, "justice", "peace", and "the integrity of creation" are to be recognized as indispensable dimensions of a contemporary Christian ethic. With this awareness, we can work to build a moral framework capable of providing significant and inclusive nurture for all of God's people and their fellows-in-creation. Then we might be freed from a proud, human-centred ethic that has plagued many of our respective traditions for a very long time.

IV. MEANINGS OF "THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION"

(Note the definitions of "The Integrity of Creation" in the paper by Douglas John Hall, Amsterdam Document 1987).

A. The natural order has an observed inter-connectedness and so an integrity in this sense.

B. From a theocentric perspective (as delineated in sections II and III, above), the creation in all its aspects is of value to God - and hence is to be respected by us. "The integrity of creation" in this sense refers to the intrinsic and instrumental value of each creature in its relationship to its environment and to God. The determination of precisely how each creature and its inter-relationships might best be valued should be an important part of the JPIC agenda. It is very important to recognize that we human beings are an integral part of a vast community of life, an inter-connected whole.

C. These considerations are related to the idea of an eschaton (an "end") and its relationship with the Kingdom of God, in which our hope is expressed that an ultimate harmony will be restored to creation, in which "God will be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:28).

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE JPIC PROGRAMME OF THE WCC AND FOR THE FUTURE AGENDA OF THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY WORKING GROUP

A. Further articulation of the theology of nature and the theocentric ethic outlined in this paper is needed. It is recommended that the Church and Society sub-unit develop these ideas further, by holding a small consultation to address them in the latter half of 1988. It is proposed that from ten to twelve persons from various parts of the world present papers at this meeting, with the object of preparing for publication a volume that will consist of these papers, an introduction, and a report of the consultation.

B. A reconsideration of the biological manipulation of life, is necessary and should include the following items:

1. genetic engineering;

2. in vitro fertilization and its ramifications (including the matter of frozen embryos);

3. the patenting of life-forms;

Discussions on these and similar issues should be undertaken in consultation with non-Christians and include inter-faith dialogue.

C. We need to engage in a Christian critique of some of the current secular literature on global environmental concerns, e.g. the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (published in English as Our Common Future); N.N. Moiseyev, V.V. Alexandrov, A.M. Tarko, Man and Biosphere (Moscow, 1985); and I.T. Frolov, ed., Horizons of Ecological Knowledge: Social Philosophical Problems, (Moscow, 1986).

D. We must study attempts to find patterns of sustainable development that avoid critical threats to the environment.

E. We must forge links with non-church agencies having environmental concerns, such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the World Wildlife Fund and the successor to the World Commission on Environment and Development.

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